Bulletin

of the UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES

Number 24

4th Quarter
1955

146 Queen Victoria Street London EC4

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UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES

BULLETIN

FOURTH QUARTER - 1955

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Editorial

THE present issue of the Bulletin is almost exclusively devoted to information about colportage work in various parts of the world. It is not the first time that this aspect of Bible Society work has been dealt with in the pages of this periodical. But it seems that in the last twelve or eighteen months further thinking has gone on in relation to this problem of the missionary circulation of the Scriptures—doubtless also greatly stimulated by the publication of Dr. Chirgwin's books and documents. In this issue an attempt is made to give as broad a picture as possible of the situation as it exists to-day in various parts of the world.

Although in some areas colportage can follow the traditional pattern, in other cases one can discern a need for more concentrated efforts, carefully planned and prepared, in close collaboration with the local churches and with the co-operation of as many of their members as possible. The day seems to be past, when Bible Society colporteurs had to work in isolation, without any real support on the part of the churches either locally or on the national level.

But even in countries and areas where the churches are most open to and active in colportage, it appears that the Bible Societies still have a useful ministry to perform in stimulating and helping the churches in that service. In that respect the South American experiment calls for serious consideration, and might well offer the pattern along which Bible Societies could extend their service wherever the churches themselves become aware of the tremendous missionary opportunities which a well-conceived plan of Gospel distribution could open up for the proclamation of the Christian message.

Of the greatest importance, also, are the plans chosen by the B.F.B.S. for an intensification of the missionary circulation of the Scriptures in Africa. For many months I have been struck, in conversations with colleagues of the B.F.B.S. and in meetings of the sub-committee responsible for Africa, by the growing concern to find ways and means by which the people of that great continent might have access to the Word of God more easily than has been the case hitherto. The African situation, as far as Bible Society work is concerned, is extremely complex, as could be seen from the various articles published on Africa in recent issues of the BULLETIN. The B.F.B.S. is now setting up a new pattern of work which will be followed for many years to come, and one can be grateful to Dr. Platt for having presented the main lines of these new policies so clearly for the readers of our journal.

* * *

During the summer I have been called upon to represent the Bible Societies at two important meetings. One was the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and various other committees connected with it. The other was the Y.M.C.A. centenary. Readers will have read accounts of both gatherings elsewhere. I should just like here to draw attention to a feature common to these two sets of meetings : namely, the renewed affirmation which took place both in Davos and in Paris of the centrality of the Bible in the thinking and work of the organisations concerned.

In Davos, this affirmation found one of its expressions in the warm interest shown in the joint UBS-WCC-IMC programme of studies and promotion to be undertaken from early next year by our new Study Secretary, the Rev. E. H. Robertson. These meetings in Davos contributed a great deal towards securing a central place for that work in the concerns of the W.C.C.

In Paris, the so-called YMCA "Paris Basis" (which calls YMCA's to seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men), received warm approval and again and again in the main addresses and in the group discussions the importance was stressed of the study of the Bible and even of its circulation by the responsible leaders, as part of the upholding of the Paris Basis. As Robbins Strong put it in the "Christian Century": 'The second century calls this leadership (of the YMCA) to a deeper knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrine and a greater commitment to share it in the daily round of programme activities'. Here again there is a note which cannot leave the Bible Societies indifferent but rather calls them to help, as far as lies within their means, to encourage and help the leaders of the local and national YMCA's along that line which the centennial meeting so responsibly indicated.

O.B.

POLICY IN EQUATORIAL AFRICA

by WILLIAM J. PLATT

IN large measure, the peoples of Equatorial Africa first saw western civilisation through the portals of the Christian church and school. In that part of Africa south of the Sahara which has come under the influence of Britain and Belgium, missionary societies have also hitherto almost monopolised the circulation of literature amongst African people. In the extensive area which comes under French control, though the Government itself has taken the initiative, there is a considerable amount of literature in French specially written for Africans and missions have exercised considerable educational influence.

The phenomenon of the Christian Church making itself responsible for the education of whole peoples is quite remarkable in a territory five thousand miles across and can only be parallelled in history—and that over many centuries—by the way in which the Church became the tutor of western Europe itself. It has been said that the content of the Latin Bible once saturated the thought of western Europe, and in Africa the translated Bible may one day be seen to have prepared the very foundations of a new African civilisation.

Already the fact that African education has been largely in the hands of the Church has resulted to a surprising degree in deciding that the part of the population which is literate is often that part which has been in contact with missionary work. Thus has it come about that the missions themselves have become the vehicle through which vernacular literature has in the main been distributed. Indeed, Christian missions have built up in Africa a series of bookshops almost without parallel in any other mission field. At first, ordinary trading organisations were not much interested in literature—a commodity from which profits (on pre-war prices) were small and the stocking of which seemed risky. As literacy has spread, however, business firms have in more recent years manifested an increasing interest—particularly in the supply of ordinary school books and in stationery.

Long-standing co-operation

Ever since the foundation of modern missions on the West Coast, in East Africa and in the Congo, the policy of the British and Foreign Bible Society has been to co-operate fully with the large mission bookshops, giving them generous discounts and long credits on the circulation of the Scriptures. Over the years, this system has helped to strengthen the bookshops themselves and has diminished the overhead costs of Scripture distribution for the Bible Society. Moreover, until recent years, this method was adequate to keep the Gospel before the only folk who could read—namely the Christian community. The B.F.B.S. has, therefore, had long-standing agreements with the various Christian bookshops (e.g. C.M.S. and M.M.S. in Nigeria ; S.P.C.K. in Uganda and Tanganyika ; C.M.S. in Kenya ; Methodist and Presbyterian on the Gold Coast, etc.), whereby these distributing agencies (together with their local church outposts) had what amounted to a sole agency for the circulation of Scriptures. In the Congo, it was the B.F.B.S. which actually proposed to the Congo Protestant Council the first centralised system of book distribution (now L.E.C.O.) guaranteeing it financially and approving the appointment of its first manager. The Society is also a large shareholder in the L.E.C.O. Press.

The changing scene

The last generation has, however, brought changes in most things African —changes not only in the outlook of African peoples and their emergence towards nationhood, but also in such ordinary things as the distribution of books, which nevertheless form so essential a part in the spread of knowledge. Changes have taken place too, in education. Thousands of mission schools, both primary and secondary, are now carried on by the help of Government subsidy and this has necessitated that they conform to Government standards and inspection. This fact in turn has sometimes involved the diminution of early evangelistic aims in favour of higher scholastic attainment.

Education, then, is tending to escape from the control of the Church—as indeed it has largely done in Europe. African chiefs, too, are not now slow to ask for 'Native administration schools', which are often entirely separate from the missions, working under Native Administration Councils and governed often by a community still largely non-Christian. In Mohammedan areas, of course, education has always been in the main non-Christian, subsidised by the Government and under the control of a local Emir, or ruler, and guided by a political officer. In both pagan and Mohammedan areas literacy classes are to-day often found in social welfare centres, women's institutes and the like, while literacy campaigns are stimulated by Governments with the aid of vans and elaborate visual aid equipment. Such tendencies, and there are many others, present the Bible Societies with an ever-increasing literate section of African society where Church and Christian bookshop influence are on a diminishing scale, but within which Christian Scriptures ought to be available.

As a background to these more peculiarly Christian interests, there is a widespread disintegration of tribal life itself. Old sanctions and illiterate ancestor worship are breaking down before the devastating impact of a 'thought-governed' but largely secular civilisation. To-day we witness the detribalisation caused to hundreds of thousands of people by the spread of industry, mining, railways and "labour lines" of all descriptions. However good the social services may be, the emphasis on money and material possessions is fairly new to the average African for whom religion was formerly at the heart of his social system and morality. To-day, also, we witness the rise of a new kind of nationalism, based no longer on tribe, nor even on a common language, but on an *African* nationhood, whose roots lie in a solidarity between those born in Africa or those who are coloured. (In passing, let us remember how enormously Islam stands to gain by this new outlook, for it is often spoken of as "a black man's religion", and makes few higher moral demands upon its convert, though it often succeeds in giving him an enhanced social status.)

Here, then, we face whole areas of African life in spiritual transition which present to us a challenge on a continental scale. Amidst these changes the Christian Church now finds herself as just one of the many voices competing for the interest of the African. Amongst all our preoccupations, however, we remember for our own encouragement that the African is a religious person and one who is used to order in his native societies. So alongside the forces of disintegration we see great new Christian congregations growing up, some of them numbering scores of thousands of communicants, some already self-supporting and self-governing.

Bible Society work

We now turn to the main question to be asked in this article : What have we to say about the availability of the Scriptures in this challenging situation ?

Before we can answer we must face the fact that a change has also taken place within the Christian bookshops themselves which, as stated, have been our main distributing agents. With the rapid increase in the literate population and the increase in the material wealth of Africans the bookshops appear to have grown enormously. In a well-known West Coast bookshop, for example, thirty years ago the total stock value amounted to some £30,000 or £40,000. To-day, that same bookshop has an annual turnover of more than £250,000. But growth has not been the only change, for in some cases there appears over the years to have been a change in emphasis. Ordinary school textbooks (now a very important item from the money point of view) and the sale of writing materials now offer a large margin of profit and, in this new setting, the sales of Scriptures have, in some cases, come to form but a fractional part of annual turnover. It is, of course, true that the circulation of the Gospel does not offer a big profit margin, though it still remains an essential part of sound missionary work. Again, the Bible Societies must face the fact that the holding of considerable local stocks of Scriptures in an ever increasing variety of translated languages involves large sums of money—particularly so in view of the increased cost of Scripture production since the war. It may be true, also, that the circulation of what may be called purely Christian literature has never really touched the imagination of the home boards of missionary societies as, say, medical or school work have done. So, of necessity, without subsidies from home for Christian literature, the bookshops have had to "pay their way", and the work has often to be viewed from the angle of a profit motive. As overhead expenses have greatly increased since the war, this factor has become accentuated. There is therefore a danger in some places that the missionary and evangelistic note in some bookshops may slowly disappear. The meaning of all these tendencies for a Bible Society will be evident.

New policy

The British and Foreign Bible Society has therefore become increasingly conscious that a change in its policy and greater flexibility in distribution methods are desirable. Formerly, one of its agents, the Rev. A. W. Banfield, was resident in Lagos, travelling extensively in West Africa and the western Congo, while Mr. W. J. W. Roome, who lived in Uganda, journeyed throughout East Africa and the eastern Congo. Then, for a period, the Equatorial African office was centred in London with a full-time travelling secretary going to Africa almost annually and reporting to the General Committee.

Five years ago, however, a change was decided upon and the Rev. Frank Bedford was appointed to East Africa. More recently the Society decided to revert to its former method of having local representation in West Africa, and Mr. Norman H. Hunter and the Rev. Eric M. Roulet have taken over the supervision of distribution in British and French territory respectively ; while in the Congo Basin, the Rev. A. W. Marthinson now supervises the work.

Important as these changes in personnel are they do not, however, represent the major change in policy. As a result of three extensive General Secretarial visits to Equatorial Africa in the last three years, further modification in distribution policy is planned. Local Scripture stocking which was formerly left, as stated, to the Christian bookshops is now to be undertaken by the Society itself and the Society has therefore built new residences in Nigeria and the Congo, and is planning another in French West Africa. A

Scripture warehouse is being built on the wharfside at Lagos, Nigeria, where Scriptures can be held in bond, ready for immediate supply to local churches and bookshops. It is hoped that this method will speed up supplies and make available, actually in Africa, larger stocks, the cost of which will no longer be borne by bookshops but by the Bible Society. A further site is under consideration in Nairobi, Kenya, and in the Congo an agreement has been made with L.E.C.O. for similar stocking space. Ultimately in these places, it is hoped that Bible Houses, with accommodation for shop and offices, will be rented or erected—as had already been done in Rhodesia, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

From these centres, as literacy spreads, colportage and van distribution may be necessary and are already an actuality in Kenya. In almost all these areas, auxiliaries or advisory committees, consisting of leading members of local Christian communities are in existence, so that part of the work of the new staff will be the education of local churches in Bible Society matters and possibly the ultimate foundation of indigenous Bible Societies—where the Christian community is large and mature enough to give hope of healthy development in the rooting of Bible Society work in the life of the local people.

Mr. Roulet and Mr. Marthinson themselves are translators of experience, and with their presence translation problems ought to be easier of solution. Mr. Hunter is a specialist in the book trade, and Mr. Bedford has had wide experience in pioneer evangelism in both East Africa and the Rhodesias.

Gospel portions

In recent years amongst the rapidly growing churches of Africa, the general tendency has been to require more and more complete Bibles. This development has sometimes led to the neglect of the Gospel portion—the feeling in local congregations, as in bookshops, has been that where a complete Bible or New Testament has been published, the circulation or even the possession of a Gospel portion has rather lost its attraction for the people. As long as literacy remained largely within the walls of the Christian community, this tendency was understandable, for the Scripture needs of Christian congregations were met. But to-day literacy extends outside the influence of the churches and we have to sound a new evangelistic note. We have therefore taken a new look at this situation and have decided to revert to an earlier pioneer method of distributing more Gospels—a method once used in areas where the printed page was a novelty. From our Jubilee funds and from special gifts we are planning to spend many thousands of pounds on mobile units and visual aids to "speed the Gospel" to peoples in the large new urban areas, African reserves, locations and "labour lines". Supplies of Gospels are being circulated to missionaries at any price they can get for them. We believe it still to be sound policy that, by and large, some payment is desirable if the Word is not to be cheapened, but now we are offering "missionary terms" for Gospels in order to stimulate new evangelistic efforts.

Such, then, are some of the decisions concerning policy, which we have adopted in face of the turmoil within the soul of great African communities. These decisions are taken at a time when we believe thousands are seeking a new spiritual home. The Society has worked in Africa since 1808, but at no time in its history has the spread of the Word been more laid on our hearts

THE PROSPECTS OF COLPORTAGE IN EGYPT

by James M. Roe

The following are extracts from a longer article in which the writer gives a detailed account of problems of a more technical nature concerning the supervision and recruitment of colporteurs. Any readers interested in the full text should apply for it to the U.B.S.

IT is probably true to say that, of all the countries on the Mediterranean, Egypt has clung longest to the methods of colportage which were first introduced a century ago. Indeed, several of the staff have a record of more than thirty years' service in this work, and the senior colporteur has just completed his fiftieth year in the work. This may well prove a record for any field.

Methods have remained unchanged for several reasons, of varying importance. One reason is that village life in Egypt changes at a slower pace than urban life, and that our colporteurs are still for the most part village workers. They do a work which an Egyptian who turned up on a motorcycle and wore a European suit could not do. Their way of life and their outlook are adjusted, and indeed akin, to that of the village dweller. Whilst rural life remains substantially unchanged, the traditional colporteur, arriving on his donkey, will be appropriate to it. He will sit at the door of a home and read aloud ; perhaps he will sing a hymn, and teach its words to the children. He will accept a night's lodging, sell his books at the house doors, and next day move on to another village.

Those who sit behind city desks, with telephones, airmail and a pile of memoranda on 'Modern Methods of Colportage', are hesitant—and rightly so—before they abandon such traditional usage in the name of reorganisation and modernity. Men who have worked thus for between a quarter and half a century and who, only last year (1954) circulated 47,376 copies out of a total for the country of 82,434 copies, merit respect in their calling and methods. They are thus respected. Some of them are Church elders ; almost without exception they are as devout and enthusiastic to-day as they would seem to have been when they began, and significantly, it is increasingly hard to secure young men with devotion and humility enough to replace them.

I. Present Practice

In the Nile Delta

We may examine more closely the variations in this traditional pattern. Such variations are in some measure determined by the peculiar geography of Egypt. What can be done in one area is impossible in another. For instance, work in the Nile Delta can be organised from the great agricultural town of Tanta, which stands in the middle of this intensely cultivated and heavily populated triangle. The practice for thirty years has been for a team of ten or more colporteurs to work on planned weekly itineraries, starting from Tanta and radiating out like spokes from a wheel. Such itineraries are planned in advance and, on completion, subject to searching verification by the Superintendent in Tanta. A weekly report is given by each man and his sales are entered and the receipts paid in. His travelling expenses are verified and the sum adjusted with any advance payment he may have had. For two weeks out of four the colporteurs will follow itineraries which take them into remote villages and hamlets. Often they will have gone most of the way on

foot or on donkey. They will have begged accommodation from Christian friends, or else slept on the floors of native cafes. They will have reached centres where there are no bookshops and where printed books are scarce. Illiteracy will have been an obstacle, but they will have found many readers—some sympathetic, others perhaps hostile.

The third week of work is spent in one of the market or manufacturing towns of which, in the delta area, there are at least eight of a considerable size. Here the colporteur will visit shops and offices, as well as homes, and find variety in his work. Another week may then be spent on village work, especially if a younger and unmarried colporeur is involved. Every two or three months each colporteur will spend a week in the Tanta Sales Depot, where a change of duty and a rest from travelling are a welcome event. He has more time with his family, more time to discuss problems at leisure with his superintendent. Finally, in the tropical heat of August, colportage is suspended and four weeks' holiday are granted. This is not an indulgence when set against the rigours of eleven months' work.

In Upper Egypt

Very different is the organisation of colportage work in Upper Egypt. This again, however, is determined in large measure by geographical considerations. From Cairo to Aswan, where Egypt meets the Sudan, there runs the fertile strip of the Nile Valley. It is never more than a few miles in width, and gives place abruptly to the desert, where irrigation ceases. It is, however, densely populated, with small towns, and innumerable villages linking these. A railway line runs through the whole length of the Nile Valley to Aswan, but roads south of Cairo rapidly deteriorate and between the villages are earth tracks only.

If one makes a railway journey down this long fertile strip, every fifty or sixty miles one encounters a centre where one of the Bible Society colporteurs lives and works. So far as the Society is concerned, each one is isolated and remote, although in the larger Christian context all have close relationship with churches and missions, participating actively in their ministry. Nevertheless, for the most part these men work unsupervised. They write monthly to one of the Cairo staff, who sends their supply of books by mail and their salary by postal order. They are not men of any literary pretensions and rarely write of their experiences. One feels that much valuable information is thus lost. Their sense of fellowship and collaboration within the Society is vague ; they know little of their fellow-workers, other than the men in adjacent centres. Yet they carry out faithful work, to which many church pastors have paid tribute, and part of their success is no doubt due to the sense that each belongs to his area of responsibility and is not an interloper, still less a foreigner.

Subsidized Colportage

When the Bible Societies first began colportage work in Egypt, distribution through missions, churches, bookshops and individual agents was very small. Since that time the use of these means of distribution has developed to such an extent that in 1954 they were responsible for the sale of 22,750 copies of Scripture—27% of the total, compared with 57% sold by the twenty-four colporteurs in our direct employment. In fact the number of employed colporteurs, which has been dropping slowly over the years, has been more than made up by the number of subsidised agents. The question is bound to arise sooner or later as to whether employed colportage should be eventually

discontinued, in favour of subsidised agents whose primary commitments are to other organisations, such as missions, churches or educational bodies. Such agents are often known as "correspondents."

The advantages of subsidised colportage are obvious. Its cost is far less than that of direct employment. A percentage of the catalogue value of the Scriptures sold, which is adjusted to suit the scope of the work, is the Society's only financial obligation. It has no responsibility for the health, family welfare, eventual retirement and spiritual oversight of agents. Allowances to them can be altered or discontinued without depriving them of a livelihood, or running counter to the elaborate legislation which protects the worker in this, as in many, countries. Such agents can be selected according to the localities judged desirable, and encouraged or disciplined (if necessary) by the increasing or reducing of discount allowed.

Before passing to the possible disadvantages of this system, let it be clear that the present relationship between the Egypt Joint Agency and its voluntary distributors is one of confidence and mutual support. Many of the possible abuses mentioned in the following paragraphs are theoretical possibilities, and it should not be supposed that even those drawn from actual experience are of every-day occurrence. On the contrary, the Agency is indebted to its voluntary distributors for much faithful and loyal work.

Nevertheless it is worth taking note of the less satisfactory tendencies which have arisen in the past, in this and possibly other areas.

There is a risk of correspondents accumulating stocks of unsold books, which may all too easily become unsaleable books. Sometimes an organisation with surplus funds invests a part of these in books. Scriptures bought may be far beyond current requirements, and may remain in stock—gradually deteriorating—for many years.

Some problems to be faced

On the financial side there are a number of problems. One, for instance, concerns discounts allowed. Correspondents vary enormously in their requirements, as well as in the volume of work achieved.

Selling prices are also a source of possible trouble. Correspondents are always given to understand that their discount is granted on condition that the Society's catalogue prices are maintained. Correspondent-colporteurs tend to assume that having paid for the books they are free to use them as they like. It is a viewpoint singularly difficult to combat!

Third amongst the possible difficulties comes that of personnel. The view has been held, and may still be held by some, that anyone may be a voluntary colporteur or correspondent. We would emphasise that correspondents must be men, women or organisations of good standing and known respectability. The Bible, as well as the Society, will be judged by its honorary as well as its salaried agents, and we are entitled to assure ourselves that these worthily represent us.

II. The Future

Against this background the questions regarding the future of colportage in Egypt must be posed. We may conclude by summing up the tendencies of the policy which is taking shape, not according to a preconceived 'blueprint' but rather by the gradual adaptation of the old traditions in the light of new conditions and fresh ideas.

Different requirements in towns and villages

That the old generation of colporteurs must be permitted to continue cannot be disputed. We could not dismiss them if we would, and we would not do so if we could. In the life of the Egyptian villages they will have a place for many years to come, and successors must be found for many of them who will carry on in a manner not very different from that of the men they succeed. With the increase in missions, churches and voluntary distributors, there has also come an increase in literacy, and it can be assumed that about a score of such colporteurs may be serviceably employed in Egypt for some years to come. The only condition is that such men maintain their pioneer spirit, and seek always to sell their books in those centres which are normally restricted in their communication with other centres where the Scriptures are accessible. As literacy increases and education progresses, there will be need for the village colporteur to be rather better equipped intellectually than has sometimes been the case, but the essential qualifications remain the same, and he must not outgrow his environment nor lose touch with his compatriots. We have not reached the stage where a long training in seminary or Bible school is to be regarded as a necessary, or even a desirable qualification.

A different approach is required in the larger cities however. At present three colporteurs are normally stationed in each of the two principal cities of Egypt, Cairo and Alexandria. Some of these are similar to the village colporteurs in experience and outlook, and their work therefore tends to be confined to the poorer quarters and artisan population. These people could be reached just as effectively by the men in the villages, if they were brought to Cairo. It is therefore intended to replace the present city colporteurs, as they retire, with men of another type. Possibly this will mean employing two men where three were employed previously, with a proportionate redis-distribution of the available salaries. Such men will, it is hoped, be of a higher standard of education, have a knowledge of two, or possibly three languages, wear European dress, and be able to approach effectively the professional and business population of the city. They will also be more fitted to call at the villas and apartments in residential parts of the city, and, not least, to take a period of service in the depots or in clerical work when required. Colporteurs of this type are already employed in our sister-agency, Bible Lands North, and a limited number are certainly desirable in Cairo and Alexandria.

Maintaining standards and fellowship

Problems of leadership are also important. For many years the system described as covering the Nile Delta from our Tanta centre has owed its success largely to the guidance and supervision of one man. He is the local Superintendent, and an Egyptian citizen of outstanding personality and experience. The continuation of the system of which he has been mainly the architect depends upon the finding of a successor of similar gifts. Such a man is a rarity, and if he cannot be found and trained in preparation, the whole system will have to be reviewed.

It is clear that for full use of the scattered staff in Upper Egypt there must also be a greater measure of association. The sense that they are isolated guerillas, rather than members of an army, must be dispelled. It is proposed to accomplish this in three ways :

1. By bringing the men in turn to work in Cairo or Alexandria for periods of a few weeks duration. Besides giving them a change of territory, this

will give them fuller opportunities to understand the work of the depots and Field office, and to meet the other members of the staff ;

2. By appointing a suitable supervisor of colporteurs, to cover the work in the Nile Valley between Cairo and Aswan. It is emphasised that his duties will be essentially constructive, in the encouragement, assistance and guidance of each colporteur in all aspects of his life and work. He will also maintain contact with the churches, missions and correspondents in the Nile Valley, and prepare reports and publicity material on the work accomplished of a kind which the men are incapable of doing for themselves.

3. By developing the practice, instituted in 1954, of holding an annual conference of colporteurs, at which the men from all centres will meet together with other members of the staff. The benefit of this conference is almost certainly greatest for those who are normally most isolated. In 1954 the conference was of a single day's duration only, but in 1955 this was increased to two days, which was felt to be the most satisfactory period.

The Society's responsibility towards colporteurs

Finally, emphasis must be laid upon one thing which, though little mentioned in these paragraphs, is implicit and fundamental. The key to successful colportage is in the character of the man employed. Systems, methods, special techniques, will avail nothing if the man is not truly called of God and dedicated to His Service. Similarly, if a man is so dedicated, then he is to be trusted, and all systems should be directed not to control, verify and 'police' his work, but to encourage him and to develop and widen his opportunities. If a colporteur really wishes to deceive, he can probably find new ways as rapidly as his supervisor detects the old ones, and when confidence is lost, work rapidly deteriorates. We do better to guard our colporteurs against fatigue, staleness, loneliness, a sense of being neglected or despised, and to pay them adequately, ensure they have an occasional change and sufficient holiday ; that family anxieties are not overburdening them and that their spiritual life in fellowship with their own communion is active and not in decay. It is to these ends that our present plans in Egypt are directed.

NEW TRAINING PROJECT FOR LATIN AMERICA

by Paul A. Collyer

STATISTICS are not available to show the total of Scriptures distributed by colportage to-day as compared with the number distributed by the same method in past years. Although the total number of volumes may have increased in one hundred years, it is probably safe to say that the percentage of total distribution which can be credited to colportage has decreased. By "colportage" in the statements above and what follows is meant Scripture distribution by full-time employees of the Bible Society, a church or a mission of the churches, who sell their books at established prices and who work under the direction of their employing organisation.

Traditionally colportage has been a pioneering thrust of missionary evangelism. The colporteur has often been the first Christian witness in a nation or community. The books he has distributed in many instances have

been the seed from which Christian faith has developed and churches have been established. Sacred and cherished are the memories of many colporteurs who have taken and established beachheads for missionary advance. Many such pioneers are faithfully at work to-day. Uncounted thousands of cities and villages have not yet been visited and the need for trained capable colporteurs will continue so long as any area has no active church.

However, the situation to-day as compared to a century or even a generation ago, is greatly changed outside Europe and North America. To-day great areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the islands of the seas have received the Gospel. Churches are established. Some of these are large, strong and self-supporting and rival in vigour and a sense of missionary responsibility the churches in the lands from which the missionaries came. Many others, though smaller and weaker, are determined to evangelise their own communities. They appreciate the necessity and effectiveness of Scripture distribution in community evangelism. They seem to lack only training in the effective distribution and use of the Scriptures in evangelism.

Need for trained colporteurs

Such is the situation in most parts of Latin America. Thomson, Milne, Penzotti and others opened the area to the Gospel through their far-flung colportage journeys. Cursed, spat upon, beaten and jailed, they scattered the printed Word widely and unceasingly. Others, both foreign missionary and national, caught up their burden and pioneered in every country of the area. It was inevitable that churches should come into being as the seed took root. As churches were born and grew they supplied men for wider as well as more intensive colportage. The greater the distribution, the more the churches grew. To-day more Scriptures are being distributed in Latin America than in any other comparable area except the United States of America. It is not to be wondered at that the churches are growing faster in Latin America than in any other area of the world.

Whereas in the past colportage has been the chief channel of distribution in Latin America, to-day it ranks only second or third, depending on the country. In most countries the largest volume of distribution is through the churches. Many churches have undertaken to reach every home in their neighbourhood or community and to place a Gospel or Testament in it. Recently a church in Venezuela bought twenty thousand illustrated Gospels for systematic distribution. Many churches have Gospel teams that regularly distribute Gospels in their evangelistic calling. Each of one hundred churches in Argentina distributes five thousand Gospels annually in its community. Though many other similar examples could be given, it must also be acknowledged that the great majority of churches are not engaged in systematic, careful, effective distribution efforts. This is due not to a lack of interest or conviction regarding the evangelistic power and usefulness of the Scriptures, but rather to a lack of training in evangelistic Scripture distribution.

Training project being inaugurated

To meet this need the American Bible Society has worked out a programme, in which it is hoped that the B.F.B.S. will co-operate, for the recruitment, training and employment of young men for this specialised ministry in Latin America. The project is only in its initial stages at the moment. However, pastors, lay people and missionaries throughout Latin America who have been consulted give the project their hearty endorsement with the comment that the programme will meet a great and long-felt need.

The programme calls for the recruiting of a limited number—probably from eight to twelve a year—of young men from the seminaries, Bible schools, the pastorate and perhaps also from among the laity. Only men of the highest character and ability will be considered. Applicants must have completed *colegio*, which is approximately equivalent to two years of college in the United States, and the standard seminary course for his country. If the applicant is a layman, he must have completed the *colegio* and be willing to take a year's course of Bible studies in a standard seminary.

Recruiting of trainees

Applications will probably be screened by the agency secretaries in the several countries. The recruiting officer will probably travel through the area once a year to interview the applicants nominated by the agency secretaries. From these will be chosen the number of men for training the following year. Those chosen will then be given psychological and aptitude tests, not in the expectation that these tests will unerringly indicate which men will be successful, but in the hope that they will point out the ones who, because of personality traits, are likely to be problems or failures. Only after a man passes his tests, and only if he can supply statements of good character, Christian zeal and recommendation of fitness for the work from his church and other persons who know him, will the Societies agree to train him professionally.

The first stage of training will be an apprenticeship in the local agency. Here he will be under the direction of the local secretary and will probably spend most of his time in customary colportage. The length of time spent will probably vary from three to six months. If the recruit is successful in this first training effort, and if he still feels a call to the Scripture distribution ministry, he will then be sent to the training centre.

At the training centre, which (for most men) will be in a country other than their own, he will spend about ten months in intensified classroom studies and field demonstration and practice. Experience will undoubtedly indicate changes that should be made both in the content and the method of presentation of the course of study. However, as at present planned, the content of the course is determined by the function and nature of this specialised ministry. The educational process will be in the form of units of experience involving discussion, lectures, the sharing of experiences both within and without the formal class situation, and field practice and experiment. The class organisation will be largely of the seminar type. Field experience will be carefully supervised and will provide for reports, evaluation, experiment and the preparation and study of case histories.

Programme of course

The content of the course of training will be in four main divisions as follows :

A. *The Scriptures*

1. To strengthen habits of continuous study and private meditation.
2. To deepen the understanding and appreciation of the Scriptures.
3. To point up the Scriptural material most useful in evangelism and colportage.
4. To provide for greater understanding of the nature of the Bible, its origin and transmission.

B. *The Bible Societies*

1. To provide knowledge of their origin and history.
2. Historical development of policy.
3. Organisation and strategy.

C. *Distribution methods and procedures*

1. To provide the knowledge and skills for the task of distribution and promotion of use.
2. To provide such auxiliary knowledge and skill as will improve the efficiency of the methods ; salesmanship, psychology, group dynamics, personal evangelism, teaching adults, etc.

D. *Background studies*

For greater effectiveness to provide such knowledge as will deepen the man's understanding of the situation in which he serves ; the Bible in Church history, spiritual history of Latin America, the denominations and sects of the area, the organisation and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Latin American culture, etc.

Section C. is the centre core of the curriculum to which all other studies and activities will be related. Section A. provides the material and motivation. Section B. provides orientation and indoctrination. Section D. provides the religious and cultural enrichment for greater effectiveness.

The programme of training will probably be divided into three units : the first unit of four months will be devoted to classroom work ; three months will then be spent in full-time supervised field work ; the last three months will again be spent in the classroom with afternoons and perhaps weekends devoted to local field practice. Dr. Samuel F. Nelson, who has had long experience as president of the Spanish-American Baptist Seminary in Los Angeles, has been appointed director of the training programme.

Field work

When the training period is ended each man will be assigned to a Bible Society agency—probably the one from which he came—for employment as a field worker. The talents of the man and the needs of the area will determine his particular assignment. A few men will probably concentrate on colportage, engaging in distribution in unevangelised communities, and giving assistance and encouragement to the agency colporteurs. However, the training programme is not designed primarily to train colporteurs but rather field men who will devote most of their time to assisting churches in the evangelistic distribution of the Scriptures by its lay members. On the field the worker will assist the churches of a community in planning, organising, executing and then following up a distribution campaign. Depending on the size of a community, the interest of the churches, the degree of co-operative participation by the churches and various other factors, the field worker may devote from as little as two weeks to as much as six months to a community campaign.

As contemplated now, a field worker's direction of a typical community campaign would be somewhat as follows. After the agency secretary had written to the pastors of a community introducing the field worker and offering his services, the worker would go to the community and call on the pastors either individually or, if possible, as a group and describe how he is prepared to help if the churches agree to undertake a programme of evangelism

through Scripture distribution and use. If the pastors agree that the churches should work together in such a project, he will then organise a committee of representatives from all the participating churches. With the committee he will work out a detailed calendar of operations providing ample time for preliminary preparations and the training of the lay workers. Next step will be the dividing of the community into sections, each section to be the responsibility of a church, thereby providing for complete coverage without overlapping or duplication. During the period of initial planning and organising, the pastors will be encouraging their church members to volunteer for service. Supplies of Scriptures will be ordered early so they will be on hand when needed. Shortly before visitation is to begin, the field worker will go from church to church to instruct the volunteers in the best methods of visitation and distribution. He will show how to approach a home, a place of business, or a person on the street. He will point out passages of Scripture that are particularly useful in attracting interest. He will suggest replies to be used with persons who object that they can't read, they are Roman Catholics, the priest has warned them against reading the Bible, they have no money, they haven't time to read, or with other of the many objections that may be raised. Many persons are timid about distributing Scriptures and doing evangelistic calling largely because they do not know how to approach strangers and do not know what to reply to objections. Given instructions in these matters, it is to be expected that many people will gain the courage to try.

Follow-up of field work

When the distribution is completed the campaign and the field worker's task is only partly done. There needs to be a systematic follow-up to take full advantage of the initial interest created when the Scriptures have been placed in a home. For this the field worker will need to see that careful records are kept of all homes where Scriptures were placed. With these records the field worker will help the churches organise a second visitation in which the visitors will return to the homes to encourage Scripture reading. For this the lay-people will probably need further though shorter instruction on how to help people read with understanding. If possible the visitor who placed the Scriptures should make the follow-up calls to encourage and help those who have not started reading or who have started reading but gave up because they could not understand. Through a series of calls the visitor is likely to discover opportunity to lead those who are interested into faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour and into fellowship with the local church. This follow-up needs the same experienced and wise direction and encouragement from the field worker that he will give to the distribution efforts.

Beyond the leadership of distribution and use programmes, it is hoped that the field worker can be trained to lead pastors' conferences in studies of the best ways to use the Scriptures in preaching, pastoral calling and personal evangelism. He should be prepared to help church school teachers discover the best ways to use the Bible in teaching and in winning children to Christ. There should be opportunities for him to lead youth conferences in studies of how to use the Bible devotionally and in solving the problems of young people.

Opportunity for men of ability

As can be seen, this ministry is very different from the ministry of the traditional colporteur. For it only men of unusual ability can be used. They must be given a professional training beyond anything now provided by the churches and seminaries. It is hoped that the recruitment and training programme we are now beginning will attract the finest Christian young men of

Latin America and will equip them to render a service that will strengthen the churches numerically through new converts won, and spiritually through making evangelists of great numbers of lay-people. It should increase the number of Scriptures distributed. It should result in more faithful and effective reading of the Scriptures. It should also result in increased efficiency of colportage in unevangelised communities where the traditional colporteur must continue his pioneer work.

The cost of the recruitment, training and employment of field workers will be great. However, we believe that the greater service rendered will result in more churches and stronger churches that will eventually increase their gifts sufficiently to cover a large part of the cost.

This is an adventure of faith. We believe that as God has in past times given the inspiration for the ministry of colportage that has opened new fields to the Gospel of Christ, so God is inspiring, calling and leading in this new venture to meet the needs of the present day. God has richly blessed the colportage ministry. We believe He will also bless this new ministry undertaken in Christ's name.

THE ORGANISATION OF COLPORTAGE IN JAPAN

by Tsunetaro Miyakoda

AFTER the Japan Bible Society had brought to an end, in 1952, its big post-war campaign for the distribution of ten million Scriptures, normal colportage activities were resumed, thanks to the help of their supporting Societies, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society, and in more recent years an effort has been made to adapt colportage work and strategy to the present situation.

At the moment we are dealing with three types of colportage workers. Colporteurs in the strictest sense of the word number 35. They receive fixed salaries from the Bible Society and must be prepared to go anywhere as requested by the Colportage Department of the Bible House in Tokyo. They distribute exclusively Gospel portions and the cheapest edition of the New Testament in Japanese (Y 70 per copy).

Then there are what we call commissioned colporteurs. This group at the moment numbers about 50. They distribute Bibles and New Testaments mainly in the vicinity of their places of residence, and are largely paid on a commission basis. They almost play the role of pastors and missionaries in the various local areas. They visit local churches, schools, government offices, etc., selling Bibles and Testaments. Their number was, until recently, on the decline, but with the publication of the Japanese colloquial Bible we have been receiving many new applications for this work. Within two or three months we expect these commissioned colporteurs will increase in number.

The third group are colporteurs outside the Bible Society. These form a special group of Scripture distributors, which has developed within the last few years. They are financed by missions and churches and receive portions from the Japan Bible Society, distributing them on the same terms as our own colporteurs. At their request the Japan Bible Society sent its own trained colporteurs to instruct them in the work, and they are now co-operating with our colporteurs in the various local areas. This is a new and very encouraging

trend and we are doing all we can to stimulate the increase of their number and effectiveness. There at present three bands of these colporteurs : one in the Akita area, one in Shizuoka and one in the Kobe district.

For the working out of all this programme, the General Secretary is helped by a colportage secretary, Mr. G. Ishikawa who generally spends half of his time travelling around the country meeting with the colporteurs. He not only encourages them by calling at their centres, but also prepares the way for future colportage campaigns. Furthermore Mr. Ishikawa is an expert in visual-aid work, and by demonstration and advice helps the colporteurs to make better use of the audio-visual-aid materials at their disposal.

Once a year, usually in September, a three-day conference of colporteurs is arranged by the Society, when reports are given on the work done during the year. Discussion inevitably follows these reports and the younger colporteurs are able to learn from the more experienced ones. Devotions and Bible lectures are conducted by ministers of the various denominations. The last conference, which was held in Tokyo in the autumn of 1954, was attended by thirty participants. Another similar conference is planned for September this year.

Special distribution campaigns

One special feature of our colportage work to-day has been the organisation of special commando campaigns. Although basically the colporteurs carry on their work along the traditional lines of door to door visits in the area they cover, concentrated efforts have on several occasions been organised in various towns and parts of Japan. Last May, for instance, local colporteurs' conferences were held at five different places : Akita, Tokyo, Osaka, Hiroshima and Moji. These conferences brought together all the local colporteurs employed full-time by the Japan Bible Society. The meetings were conducted by General Secretary Miyakoda, assisted by Mr. Ishikawa. The devotional part of the programme was helped by local pastors and missionaries in each place. Local pastors and missionaries are usually invited to our meetings so that our colporteurs may become acquainted with them and so that they on their side may get a fuller understanding of the work of colportage.

Soon after the conferences we began a special distribution campaign in eight areas. In most places the work had been prepared many months in advance. The General Secretary or the Colportage Secretary had visited the places and called a meeting of local pastors, missionaries and Bible Society supporters and had asked for their co-operation in the campaign. The following are some brief notes on some of these efforts :

Hokkaido (northern island)

As we have no resident colporteurs in the north, in Hokkaido island, we have sent colporteurs from the central Tokyo area to work there during the past years. This summer we again sent four of our colporteurs to work in Hokkaido. In 1953 eight colporteurs were sent for a three-month period and distributed 45,000 copies of the Scriptures ; in 1954 six were sent for the same period and 80,000 copies were circulated ; four were sent this summer and the circulation target was 60,000. The numbers and types of Scriptures sold differ according to the area and the colporteurs' experience. We are very glad to report, however, that everywhere our men have been welcomed and afforded hearty co-operation by the local churches and missionaries. We are especially grateful for the help of the Mennonite missionaries in Hokkaido.

Kyushu (southern island) Yahata area

This campaign took place in a heavily industrialised area and the work was started in response to a request from the local church councils to co-operate in their evangelistic activity. The campaign was carried on when the financial situation in the area was at its worst, factories having been closed and the people suffering terribly. Eight colporteurs worked for two months and distributed 70,000 Gospels and Testaments. Notwithstanding the situation it proved to be a most successful campaign. During the two months every church in that area held special evangelistic meetings and the Bible Society again sent special lecturers on the Bible to help the churches. The General Secretary journeyed down from Tokyo twice to supervise the campaign in person.

Fukuoka

A second campaign was held in Kyushu from January to the end of March, 1955, in the city of Fukuoka, which has a population of 500,000. The Bible Society summoned all the Kyushu colporteurs to Yahata, where a three days' retreat was held at the beginning of January. During this retreat five local pastors assisted by giving lectures on the Bible and other related subjects. The General Secretary of the Bible Society led the meetings. After the retreat twelve colporteurs went to Fukuoka with the General Secretary, where a group of Christians welcomed them at the railway station. Accommodation was provided by the Fukuoka Church Federation and on the following day a welcome meeting was held at the Christian Centre. During the three months' campaign distribution by the twelve colporteurs was limited exclusively to this one city and every home was visited. They distributed 100,000 Scriptures. Men with little experience were helped by those with more experience,

and of course the latter distributed many more Scriptures than the former. Our 'best' colporteurs were able to circulate nearly 300 copies per day.

A new venture should also be referred to : the Japan Bible Society is now experimenting with a motor van, which is being sent out with a trained colporteur and a driver into the outlying districts. They take with them a varied collection of Scriptures in order to introduce church people and missionaries to the different Bibles and Testaments which the Japan Bible Society has produced since the publication of the Scriptures in colloquial Japanese. This will expand the basis of our work and should increase our Scripture circulation considerably.

During the first seven months of this year over half-a-million Scriptures were circulated by our colporteurs.

Training of colporteurs

The training of colporteurs has always been a problem and we have not yet found the best method. We intend in future, however, to have theoretical as well as practical training for them, and have already secured living quarters in Tokyo and Kobe for the men who are to follow the course. The trainee colporteurs will, while living in these quarters, attend a Bible school either in Kobe or in Tokyo, for which arrangements have already been made. The training course will last six months and will be under the direction of the senior colporteurs of the two respective towns.

LEBANON AND SYRIA—LANDS OF PROMISE

In the realm of Bible colportage

by Fouad E. Accad

THE two small Republics of Lebanon and Syria present to-day unprecedented opportunities for the spreading of God's Holy Word. In spite of the few restrictions, arising from time to time, in the nationalistic and predominantly Muslim Syria, the door remains nevertheless wide open for our non-secretarian work, which consists in circulating the Bible only. This work was greatly stabilized when we succeeded, a few years ago, in opening a Bible depot in Damascus, the capital of Syria and the city considered to be the most ancient in the world. In Lebanon, with its Christian majority—at least on paper—our opportunities are boundless and it is for us to take advantage of them while they are still at hand. In Beirut also our depot was this year reconditioned and is now fitted with an air-conditioning plant. It thus continues to be not only the increasingly pleasant "port of call" for our many friends and supporters, but has also become the "handy" home-base, from which streams of living waters continue to flow to all parts of the country.

Our Scripture distribution figures have also continued to increase. In 1954 they reached the record figure of 4,111 Bibles, 3,191 New Testaments and 33,898 Portions, making a total of 41,200 copies or over 150 books every working day of the year. The greatly increased demand for complete Bibles is especially gratifying.

Over 56% (or 23,166 copies) of the above-mentioned circulation was carried out through colportage. This is also a record when compared with previous years. Our four full-time and two part-time faithful and zealous colporteurs have continued to travel widely under all conditions, weathers and restrictions ; always seeking that the city Arab and his brethren of the

desert huts and tents, the foreigner and the Jew, the man in his everyday life or enjoying some rest in a holiday resort, may all have an opportunity to possess God's Word in the tongue they know best ; and to read for themselves the story of His love and redemption.

The training of our colporteurs

Our colporteurs are very carefully selected from amongst really convinced and eager Christians, who are full of zeal for their task of bringing the Word of salvation to others. They should be young, fairly well educated, speak more than one language and possess good health and a good appearance. They are accepted for six months' training and probation, which can be extended to another period of six months, if necessary. During that time they are given, first of all, a written course on colportage and some practical training in the depot and in colportage work by the Sub-Agent. The main points of this training centre on ways of selling the Book, of approaching people, of answering the many questions of the customers and of making friends with them even if they do not buy anything. On the spiritual ground, this training tends to make the colporteurs understand above all that their work is not a commercial task consisting of selling large quantities of books and obtaining a large sum of money, but that their mission is spiritual, aiming at putting the people in touch with God through the Book which tells them about Him ; and in putting God, via the Book, in touch with the people who need salvation. Once this training is assimilated by the candidate-colporteur and he is familiar with the different situations and cases he meets, he has then the opportunity of working with one after the other of our regular colporteurs, first in cities and towns, and later on in the villages and farms. Later on still he works in one district after another of the whole country, so that he becomes familiar with all the different situations and problems. During this time of training, and always afterwards, the colporteur keeps in very close touch with the Sub-Agent, sharing with him all his plans, experiences and difficulties and receiving from him encouragement, advice and any necessary assistance he may need for the forwarding of his work. When the candidate has proved himself capable of the task, he is then taken on the regular staff of the Bible Society and is encouraged to lay aside some savings which will enable him later on to attend a one or two years' course at a Bible school, in order to deepen his spiritual life and to gain more experience for his work. From the ten workers (colporteurs and others) employed in the Sub-Agency, seven have followed such Bible school courses, either in Shemlan, Lebanon or in Geneva, Switzerland.

Future Plans and Possibilities

I believe that it will be a tremendous help for the advancement of the work in our Sub-Agency, if the following thoughts, or at least a large part of them, were put into execution. Several of them are, in fact, under consideration.

(1) To engage two more regular colporteurs, at least, as soon as we find suitable people and then to place each of our men in one of the following strategical districts of the country : the Djezirab (Aleppo and surroundings), Homs and the Alomites, Damascus, Hawran and Djebel Druze (northern Lebanon), Beirut and surroundings and, finally, southern Lebanon. And though it is normal to make each of them responsible for his own district, experience has taught us that it will be very beneficial both to workers and to customers, if these colporteurs exchange districts from time to time, for short or long periods, working alone or accompanied by the responsible person of the district.

(2) To arrange a refresher course which will last a few days, during which all the workers of the Sub-Agency shall come together for fellowship, sharing of experiences, discussing common problems and studying new ways of approaching the people.

(3) Every three years (as was discussed in the Jerusalem Conference) to have a full year of studies, during which a period of selection of colporteurs, or candidate-colporteurs from the Near East area, can come together to follow courses specially arranged for them, and also for doing practical colportage work, individually and in groups.

(4) To make arrangements by which a Bible van is used by the different Arabic-speaking sub-agencies of the Bible Lands Agency South and North. This van should be specially equipped with projector, screen and slides on Bible subjects and should visit the villages and towns, to interest the people in hearing about and buying the Book.

(5) In case such a van is not practicable or not available, a small car equipped in the same way could do the work and achieve the same purpose in the Sub-Agency.

(6) To develop what may be called "Church colportage" which consists not only of encouraging the pastors and religious workers to spread God's Word, as we have done until now in the Sub-Agency, with very encouraging results ; but to try to interest also and especially the church members in this noble spiritual task. For this we should co-ordinate our efforts with those of the pastors of these churches, by arranging for special periods of training for their members, followed by colportage and evangelistic campaigns in one district after another of the Sub-Agency. If we succeed in doing this, I am sure that we shall experience far-reaching results, both in the life of the churches and church members, as well as in reaching the lost souls with the message of salvation and eternal hope.

(7) I should also add to the above that our efforts to help the colporteurs in making the Book better known to the public through advertisements, posters, periodicals, festivals, exhibitions, etc., should continue and be intensified. In addition, our efforts in making the Book itself nearer to the understanding of the readers and more attractive to the young and to those who are not familiar with it, by producing decorated covers and illustrated text, should likewise be intensified.

ADVANCE IN INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

Plans for India

AT the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the Bible Society of India, Pakistan and Ceylon in the Spring, consideration was given to the problem of developing methods of Scripture distribution. Plans for subsidizing colporteurs and Biblewomen, for enlisting volunteers from local churches, giving special training to a few specialists who could in turn help toward the formation of better-prepared colporteurs, were considered. Commenting on these projects, which are still at a very tentative stage, the General Secretary of the B.S.I.P.C. makes the following remarks :

The Church in recent years has increasingly taken the responsibility of distributing Scriptures by appointing its own colporteurs and enlisting lay volunteers, and the Society largely depends on the Church for colportage work. It has been felt, however, that the Society should take the initiative in providing training for colporteurs and in assisting in distribution, especially in areas where the Church is weak or where there is little active distribution going on. Distribution campaigns in the rural areas with the co-operation of the local churches are of special importance these days.

The proposal is that mobile teams should be formed to tour in selected areas for short periods of three or four weeks, visiting the various villages and churches with the object of encouraging the sale and study of the Scriptures in that area. Each team would have the use of a Bible van supplied by the Bible Society ; would consist of a leader and a driver, both of whom would be employed by the Society, together with two or three additional members who could be selected and supported by the churches in the area. The van will be stocked with Scriptures and will also carry a filmstrip projector and loudspeaker and other simple AVA material. Local churches will have an active share in these campaigns and responsibility for them.

It is believed that such campaigns will help to awaken the churches to the need of training their own members in the study of the Bible and in methods of evangelism through the distribution of Scriptures and that an increasing number of lay volunteers will be enlisted in this work. Where the campaign is successful a permanent depot for the sale of Scriptures will be established which would be staffed by volunteers from the local churches.

As a first step we hope to carry out three pilot projects in different parts of the country, but eventually eight vans will be necessary for the vast areas to be covered.

While the doors of opportunity are open it is of primary importance that the churches should be helped and encouraged in their task of Scripture distribution, and I believe this project is urgent.

P. Mahanty

Some current methods in Pakistan

ONE of the most fruitful ways of selling Scriptures I found was to fill a van with Bibles, New Testaments and Gospel portions and go on the highway, stopping in village after village. In each village I enquired first if there were any Christians. Then I invited the Christians to sell Scriptures with me by visiting every home in their village. This usually proved very fruitful, because afterwards the Christians in that village felt encouraged to sell Scriptures themselves. Furthermore, if there were any persons who wished to ask questions after reading the Gospel story, they could get in touch with local Christians. In the majority of the villages, because of the witness of the local believers, I was well received and the sales and subsequent enquiries justified the expense. On such a trip I would cover about forty villages.

A second method I have tried with good result has been to take a singing party in my car and go from village to village. These picked men sing the Gospel story and hymns and we get good crowds to come and listen. The Scriptures are then introduced to them, resulting in good sales. Usually on such a trip we are fed free by the villagers and are given a bed to sleep on if we spend the night in the village.

A third method has been to invite the new converts to Christianity to witness to their new joy and peace by selling Scriptures. Usually such converts lose their all—possessions, homes, relations and jobs—when they become Christians. As colporteurs they are not paid a salary but are given 50% discount on the Scriptures, so that they can make a living at the same time as they witness to their Lord. They often have very great opposition and even buffetings. But on the whole I find them very zealous and rejoicing when they are ill-treated.

A further method which brought good results was to collect a team of foreign and national missionaries and camp in an unevangelised area for four or five weeks. This usually created a great deal of enquiry as the Gospel was preached by the missionaries in various ways—in meetings, by lantern lectures, through picture-rolls and slides. The colporteurs then were able to sell Scriptures in good quantities.

Each of these methods was initiated by the Bible Society and then the Church was able to carry on further campaigns in this way.

CHANDU RAY

NEW EXPERIMENTS IN GERMANY

A training course in western Germany

THE work of "Bible mission" was given a good start in Germany through the training course organised by Pastor R. Steiner, chairman of the Union of Evangelical Bible Societies in Germany, and Pastor Dr. A Müller, secretary of the Union. The course was held in a YMCA centre in Dassel last July.

Men and women met together here who are active in the Bible mission work in the western part of Germany. This work is still new ; it was only begun six months ago, following the formation of the Committee for Bible Mission. It is therefore understandable if the right forms and methods for this service have yet to be worked out carefully through the course of time. The gathering in July was therefore an important step forward.

The detailed reports which the Bible missionaries gave about their work up to that time, revealed a remarkable variety in their ways of work and in the special nature of the work.

Near Hamburg, for instance, there is a huge barrack camp in which about 10,000 people live. Every day some 70 to 80 people who had to flee from the Russian-occupied zone, are flown via Berlin. They remain for some time in this camp (up to two years) and are then gradually brought to the North Rhine-Westfalian area, to be put into employment and settled there. For the most part these people have had to leave their homes suddenly, without being able to take with them any of their possessions. It will be appreciated what a tremendous need of Bibles exists in such a situation. One of our Bible missionaries therefore works in this camp ; he works under the aegis of the YMCA service to refugees. He distributes Bibles, New Testaments and Portions during his daily talks with the refugees, in connection with camp services and indeed wherever an opportunity offers.

In the neighbourhood of Stuttgart there is a camp with 800 refugees from the Eastern Zone. In this camp there is a Bible missionary at work, over 70 years old, who formerly possessed a carriers' business in East Germany, was expelled together with his family, and lost all his possessions. He visits each inmate of the camp regularly in turn, enters into conversation with them, points to the help which awaits each person through the Bible and finally sends a copy of it to each family. On the first page he inserts a Bible text which had been particularly important in the preceding talk, and in this way he relates Bible distribution and care of souls in an excellent way. In the land of Hesse the Evangelical Women's Service maintains a mothers' rest home. Here holidays are arranged, for a fortnight at a time, for women with several children who have been exhausted by their daily work and need a time of convalescence. Our woman Bible worker is also leader of the home. Every day she holds a "Discussion hour", during which the women can ask all the questions they have on their minds. The questions are discussed during the general Bible study. At the end the Bible missionary sends to every woman whose has attended the holiday a Bible which she has used during the fortnight.

In the area of the Rhennish Church one of our Bible missionaries works with the 'Volksmissionarischer Amt'. He visits many homes every day, especially in industrial communities in which numbers of refugees have recently come together, and whom it is not always possible for the overworked pastor to visit immediately. He also collaborates occasionally with the 'tent-evangelisation' of the Volksmissionarischer Amt, when he sets up a Bible stand in the tent and in this way brings Bibles for distribution. Thus he reaches especially the people who are alienated from the churches.

The concrete examples quoted here from the Bible mission work in West Germany (these are naturally only part of the whole) may show how important and essential this branch of Bible distribution is in our day and for our country. But they make it clear at the same time in what a variety of forms this service must be carried out in order to achieve practical results and to be successful. Any scheme which attempted to impose here and now a generally compulsory pattern for Bible mission would be unpractical and would not fulfil the task which we know faces us to-day here in Germany in a way appropriate to the diversity of conditions in refugee camps, industrial towns and village communities.

ALFRED MÜLLER

New ways in eastern Germany

THE Bible has become an unkown book to our people. It is true that its language has become part of our everyday life and that people are familiar with its expressions and figures of speech. Even the people who have consciously separated themselves from the Christian community cannot avoid mental pictures of biblical origin coming to their minds. But the fact remains : God's Word is now read very little. There have, it is true, been encouraging experiences from the time of the Church's struggle in 1933-45, which show how much the Word of God can become topical and effective for the present time. As a consequence all the activities of the Church have been given a biblical emphasis. It is also true that the clergy in all the pulpits are in a real sense at pains to put the Bible at the centre of their preaching. Nevertheless, even among the active church members, Bible reading leaves much to be desired. We are living again in a missionary situation, in relation

to our neighbour as much as to those further afield. Thus one can understand why the Bible Societies to-day do not wish to limit themselves only to carrying out the technical work of publication, but also wish to consider the various ways and means of promoting the use of the Bible. Alongside the constant use of small Bible exhibitions and lecture tours, which reach as far as the small village parish, a new experiment was undertaken recently in Halle by the Berlin Bible Society, which made a special attempt to take into account the particular conditions pertaining to a large town.

The name "Bible Mission Week" indicated from the outset that this was something different from the Bible Weeks, which have been held for nearly two decades—mostly during the week before Advent Sunday. These Bible Weeks are characterised by a series of Bible studies on related texts. The Bible Mission Weeks as prepared in Halle offered a series of lectures of a more composite nature. The theme, "Is the Word of God relevant?", described the present estrangement of people from the Bible and indicated ways of meeting this situation. The lecture, "The Bible—the history of the Book, the Book of history", dealt with the main subject of the week in a popular scientific form. Then in a Bible study this Book itself spoke *to* man *about* man, how he is God's creature, how he becomes God's debtor and nevertheless remains God's beloved child in Jesus Christ. On the following evening members of the Church in Halle gave their witness, as a response to the message, and made it clear how *to-day* the Word of the Scripture confronts men in all their professions and at all ages, and leads them to decision. Other evenings were devoted to consideration of the influence of the message in the realm of art. Literary creation—prose as well as verse—is often in meaning and form akin to the Holy Scriptures, as readings from the works of German writers made clear. Reproductions of pictures, from the catacomb painting up to modern films, were shown and brought the message of Christ, who is the centre of the Bible. At a musical evening the rendering of sacred music made it evident that music finds its greatest power of expression when it is the bearer and interpreter of the Word of the Bible. Services provided the opening and the closing of this Bible Mission Week, in which over 4,500 people participated. The churches of Halle as well as the Evangelical Mission of the town, in co-operation with the Berlin Bible Society, were responsible for preparing and carrying out the effort.

Members of the laymen's seminar of the city mission as well as the student Christian fellowship visited the homes in various areas of the city, in order to invite people to the events of the week and to talk with them about the blessing which comes to a life founded on the message of the Bible. Everywhere the visitors found open doors and for the most part open hearts. Apparently many a talk led to a state of repentance when those involved expressed things which they would not otherwise confess to other people.

How often these contacts were a reminder of the word of the sick man at the pool at Bethesda : "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool . . ." Such contacts also made more apparent the obstacles of various kinds which are experienced by many in attending church service, including those who, like independent inn-keepers and cinema usherettes, have no possibility of attending a service except during their holidays and on Christmas Eve. The work of visitation now begun should be continued through the channels of the parish itself. The final evening of the campaign of visiting in each congregation made it possible to see how many outside the churches had accepted the call.

In addition, during a period of fourteen days there was the opportunity of displaying an exhibition in the large hall of the city mission. It showed not only Scripture editions of the past and present, but with the help of photo-montage, mainly aimed at giving an answer to the basic questions of human life and relating it to the message of the Holy Scripture. Many more than 3,000 made use of this opportunity, conducted by the voluntary help of the Christian student fellowships and the lecturers.

Large posters on the placards and in the trams, and announcements in the cinemas made the arrangements known. The daily press reported extensively on the individual evenings and on Ascension Day gave an overall picture of the whole week, with a contribution from the city superintendent as well as extracts from the lectures. A large proportion of the visitors to all the events as well as to the exhibition consisted of people within the church, who thus experienced a strong urge to take up Bible reading again seriously. But also many a nominal Christian accepted the invitation and attended the meetings, of which we have an example in the frank statement of a man who avowed that his attendance at some of the evenings had prevented him from leaving the Church, as he had intended to do, and led him to start anew in the Christian faith.

It is intended to carry out similar weeks for Bible Mission in other large towns, adapting the arrangements according to the conditions in each town.

JOHANNES ADLER

ASPECTS OF COLPORTAGE IN HOLLAND

The following notes have been received from the Netherlands Bible Society, describing three main aspects of that Society's renewed concern for missionary distribution of the Scriptures

Use of the Bible van

In order to promote Bible distribution, the Netherlands Bible Society started the operation of the so-called "Travelling Bible House" in 1954. Originally a Red Cross ambulance car, the vehicle was transformed into a Bible shop.

Two colporteurs travel thoughout the Netherlands in this van, reaching the smallest hamlets for some of which the nearest bookseller lives miles away. Their visit offers an opportunity for the population to buy a Bible on the spot.

The procedure is as follows : the General Sales Manager plans the tour and discusses it with the pastors of the places to be visited. Wherever it goes, the van is expected.

When arrangements have been made and the van has arrived, the local pastor has enlisted beforehand a group of volunteer assistants who make themselves available for that day to help the colporteurs in their Bible distribution. Each one is supplied by the colporteur with a small box of Bibles, and after receiving his instructions they start offering the Bible from house to house. In the meantime the car follows them slowly, announcing by loudspeaker the purpose of the Travelling Bible House's visit, encouraging the inhabitants to buy a Bible. At the same time they are told where the van is to be parked for the night, for the benefit of those who might like to pay it a visit during the evening.

Right from the outset the success of this new sales method has been remarkable and it was very gratifying to note, especially in the isolated localities, how glad people were to be able to procure a Bible and to look at the samples of editions produced by the Netherlands Bible Society.

We have, moreover, convincing proof that many people do not readily take the initiative in buying a Bible, but that they will do so willingly and even with enthusiasm when the Bible is offered them. It is clear that the Bible must be brought to the people.

The considerable turnover in Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels, Psalm and Hymn books achieved through this means, has resulted in the N.B.S. launching a second car this month, which we confidently expect will meet with a similar success.

C. Antheunisse.

Special colportage editions

The booklets by Dr. Chirgwin on colportage, culminating in his excellent study "The Bible in World Evangelism", attracted lively attention in Belgium and Holland. It was felt by the Bible Societies of both countries that these booklets contained valuable and unique material which on no account should be lost as a stimulating factor for practical work.

In order to give practical expression to this line of thought, the General Committee of the Netherlands Bible Society instituted a committee of Belgian and Dutch members. Not all of these are Bible Society officials, since it was found advisable to draw in others also who are known to be familiar with the needs and difficulties of colporteurs.

The General Committee asked this Committee to draft two booklets on colportage, selecting such material from Dr. Chirgwin's work as would be adaptable to local conditions and adding examples already gained through local experience. One of these is to be a small pamphlet to serve the needs of voluntary helpers who are willing to assist the colporteur during his stay in their area, while the other, more detailed, is intended to stimulate the interest and deepen the knowledge of pastors, evangelists and all those who undertake responsibility for the organisation of colportage campaigns.

The committee is now working on this task and it is hoped that the two booklets will be published shortly.

A. W. van Lennep.

Co-operation in evangelism

According to its regulations the Netherlands Bible Society cannot undertake evangelistic work. The Society is only an instrument to serve the churches in providing them with Bibles without comment. On the other hand the churches co-operate in this work by giving moral support to membership campaigns and financial help through church collections.

However, the task of the Bible Society is not finished by merely printing and editing the Bibles required by the churches. It also has the much wider task of trying to get the Bible into the hands of the people and to stimulate its purchase and use. One means of achieving this aim is colportage with the Bible van (described in the first part of this article. Ed.).

Whenever a tour is planned in any part of the country, the Bible House gets into touch with the auxiliary committees in the area to be visited. These committees consist of members of the congregations of the different local churches. Their task is to prepare the tour of the Bible van, not only by securing permission, if necessary, for the action, but also by providing a group of local helpers.

In many cases the pastors are members of the local committees. They are able to pick from among their congregations those people who are able to spare some of their time for this work. This method has proved more efficient : the colporteurs cannot do the work all by themselves ; they need the assistance of a few helpers to get them through the planned area within a reasonable time. Another advantage is that local residents (especially in villages and smaller towns) often know the people whose homes they visit, offering Bibles. Thirdly, they are acquainted with the different congregations and their pastors, so that it is easy for them to report to the right quarter the addresses of those people with whom they had a deeper conversation about the contents and the use of the Bible.

The purpose of the Bible Society is not merely to sell as many Bibles as possible. We know that the Bible can do its own work without our human efforts and without our bearing testimony to the Gospel, but it is our task also to invite people to read the Bible, and to read it in the right manner.

However, the Bible Society cannot continue the pastoral care of men and women with whom contact has been established during the campaign. It is therefore of vital importance that the churches should take over this task of follow-up. Most of these people were already in contact with a church. Although this contact may have grown very loose, the church can often take it up again relating it to their baptism. In other cases, indifference and antipathy towards the church can open up an opportunity for the co-workers in the campaign to continue a personal contact, in the hope that they may find their way through the Bible to the Church of Jesus Christ.

P. Boendermaker.

THE BIBLE IN BELGIUM

by Olivier Béguin.

At the close of the war four colporteurs were at work in Belgium, under the auspices of the British and Scottish Bible Societies. The Belgian Bible Society, which was founded in 1946, then took over administrative responsibility for these colporteurs. To-day, thanks to the generous help which Bible Societies in other countries provide, within the framework of the United Bible Societies, that Society now employs eleven colporteurs. One of them concentrates on work among the 150,000 Italian miners and their families who are settled in Belgium. The other ten are spread over the whole country, with the exception of the German-speaking areas. For the latter a colporteur who speaks German is still required.

Bible colportage and the growth of the evangelical churches

Bible colportage has always taken a place of first importance in the life of protestantism in Belgium. It was, for example, on the basis of the work of the B.F.B.S. colporteurs, a little over a century ago, that the Christian Missionary Church in Belgium was born. The youngest church in Belgium—the Belgian Evangelical Mission, founded by an American mission which arrived in Belgium after the first world war—to-day counts 47 parishes. A dozen of these are the direct outcome of the work of the colporteurs, the period which elapsed between the time of the Scripture distribution campaign and the time when the community is formed varying from three to eighteen years. Colportage work has also played an important part in the formation and growth of most of the other communities of the Belgian Evangelical Mission.

Again, two years ago a new protestant church came into being at Chimay (an area where catholicism is predominent as a political force, and a town in which at that time no evangelical community existed). This was the result of a Scripture distribution campaign undertaken by a youth group of the Church, under the leadership of Pastor P. Caufriez, who then had a parish at La Bouverie and is to-day General Secretary of the Belgian Bible Society. Campaigns were conducted in two other neighbouring localities at the same time: in one of these a nucleus of evangelical Christians has met regularly ever since. In the other the contacts with a number of isolated individuals are followed up through a service providing spiritual help to scattered members.

An integrated programme

These few facts indicate that Scripture colportage can continue to play a part in Belgium, and explain why the Bible Society has, during the past two or three years, pleaded for an increase in the number of its colporteurs. In order to increase their efficiency these colporteurs have also been motorised. A two horse-power Citroën or a Volkswagen enable them to cover their respective areas much more systematically and quickly than they could do by train, bus or tram. (It is reckoned that in this way they save about two hours a day for colportage work). Thus the distribution figures for the first eight months of 1955 were more than double those for the same period in the previous year. It is also interesting to note that for over a year the colporteurs have met together every five or six weeks for a one-day retreat, and twice a year for an extended retreat, which also includes a programme of instruction and information. Thus for the first time for a number of years Belgium possesses a team of colporteurs who are well trained, who are a closely-knit group and unusually homogeneous.

The colporteurs are supported in their efforts by a well thought-out publicity service. Posters, tracts, a Bible Sunday, lectures, meetings with pastors, Bible exhibitions, articles in the press, all serve this end. During one whole week last spring all the taxis in Brussels bore on the publicity pennons placed on either side of the bonnet the words: "The Bible, the book of hope." The results of this were quickly seen in the increase in the number of orders which the Bible Society received from the bookshops. At the end of October, a large Bible exhibition is to be held in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels (see Bulletin 23).

Special summer campaigns

But the resourceful mind of the General Secretary of the Belgian Bible Society has not stopped here. At his request the Society's committee approved the renting for the summer of a house in two of the bathing resorts on the coast. Two of the colporteurs' families were installed in each house, and the colporteurs, working either in pairs or separately—or sometimes helped by their wives and even by their children—set about "working" the beaches. A third team based on the home of the colporteur responsible for the area, covered the central part of the coast. During the same period a lorry transformed into a caravan to accommodate two colporteurs, travelled through the Ardennes and visited places hitherto never reached by the Gospel. While in 1954 the average sales for the holiday months amounted to about 825 volumes, this summer they exceeded 3,000! A number of friends of the Bible Society also gave voluntary help, devoting their holidays to the work of Scripture distribution.

Support and follow up

This autumn, now that the colporteurs have returned to their regular fields of work and are taking up their normal activity once more, a publicity campaign among the churches is being prepared. Publicity for raising funds is no doubt on the increase for up to the present the main part of the expenses have been covered by help from Bible Societies in other countries. But this publicity aims also and first and foremost at making the work of the Bible Society and of its colporteurs better known in the main body of the churches, and at stimulating the evangelical churches and their members to collaborate even more actively with the supporters of the Bible Society in their efforts to distribute the Word of God. An attempt is also being made this autumn, in another direction, in collaboration with the Ligue pour la lecture de la Bible (Scripture Union), to follow up and help in their reading of the Bible those with whom the colporteurs have been in contact and who wish for guidance as they discover this new world of the Bible. For, as everyone recognises, it is not enough to sell the Bible; it is also necessary to see, as far as it is possible to do so, that the Bible is properly used, and here again a whole field of collaboration between Bible Society and churches opens up which until now has hardly been touched.

As with all Bible Society work, that in Belgium is interdenominational. It is the only platform to-day on which the evangelical churches of all denominations come together and co-operate, in this way making a contribution the value of which cannot be over-estimated. The colporteurs themselves come from the widest variety of church backgrounds, thus reflecting at the very heart of the Society this variety of gifts and unity of spirit. To-day the setting up of this delicate organism of the Bible Society is almost completed; the first efforts have proved to be more than encouraging. If the help from abroad continues to be assured, this excellent work tool will, by God's grace, be able to play a front-line role in winning the country through the agency of the Gospel.

A LOCAL PROJECT IN THE U.S.A.

by JOHN W. OSBERG

WHERE do Bibleless Americans live? Many live in Bibleless homes but where are Bibleless homes to be found? To be sure there are many in the back roads and across the tracks, but what few people realise is that there are Bibleless homes in every community, perhaps next door.

The Bible Society has a long-standing concern to reach such homes with the Word of God. In the State of Connecticut the Eastern District of the American Bible Society attempted to find out if there was a way in which Bibleless homes might effectively be reached and so in the spring of 1954 it launched a programme to that end. It was carried out jointly with the Connecticut Bible Society through the Department of Evangelism of the Connecticut Council of Churches. So far as is known this is the first such effort on a state-wide scale.

The plan itself was initiated by a letter sent to each one of the 900 pastors in Connecticut. The letter began: "It is our conviction that the Bible and evangelism are inseparable and that when people begin reading the Scriptures seriously they are on the threshold of a spiritual experience."

It then went on to explain that through the joint efforts of the Bible Societies free copies of the American Bible Society's 90 cent Bible would be available in reasonable quantities to any pastor who wished to place them in Bibleless homes within his parish. The letter further stated that ministers and churches who did not feel they needed such missionary help but still liked the idea might purchase the books at cost price. In addition to Bibles, other materials were offered including an "Annual Bible Reading List," " Getting More Out of the Bible," and a catalogue of English Scriptures. A coupon was provided on which all of these materials might be ordered. It was suggested that the pastor and others in the church make the distribution individually if possible, explaining the use of the Bible to the recipients. The letter was signed by the Chairman of the Department of Evangelism and the Secretary of the Council of Churches.

Such was the offer and these are the results : Over seven per cent. of the ministers of Connecticut requested materials. To be sure not all of them asked for Bibles, some requesting only the helpful materials to encourage Bible reading, but a great many did want the Word of God. Over 900 Bibles were distributed in the project. Now and then an order would arrive with a little note such as the one that said : " We feel we would like to share in this ministry and will pay the full price for each of the books we use."

The District Secretary, in calling on some of the ministers who had participated in the programme, felt that here indeed was a basic Christian service. Some churches put the question to Sunday School children bluntly, asking for a show of hands of those who did not have a Bible in their own homes. Hundreds of Bibles were thus distributed. Other ministers chose to make the survey by personal calling. One of the discoveries made in this project was that Bibleless homes were not confined to the under-privileged alone but to many others where the luxuries of life did not include the priceless Word of God.

The District Secretary called at one home where the young wife confessed that in establishing their home she and her husband had not thought about a Bible, but that now that they had one they read every day from it and were also reading from its pages to their three-year old daughter.

Another minister, in commenting on the results of the project in his community, told of a broken home where a mother, striving to provide her family with the bare necessities of life, wept tears of gratitude when he placed in her hands the Book of Books.

U.B.S. SUMMER MEETINGS—1955

OF the nearly eighty Bible Society representatives who took part, in the U.B.S. Regional conference at Boldern, Nr. Zurich (Sept. 4-8), thirty-seven were from Switzerland, the remainder coming from sixteen other countries. The latter were mainly European, including eastern Germany and Hungary, but the Lebanon, Algeria, South Africa and the U.S.A. were also represented.

Two subjects provided the main themes : the missionary responsibility of the Bible Societies for Scripture distribution at home and abroad, and the need for closer co-operation between Bible Societies and churches in the effort to bring the Bible again into the centre of the life of the churches and of individuals.

In his address on the work of a Bible Society, Bishop Berggrav pointed to the unfinished and unfinishable task of the Bible Societies. With the whole Bible existing in only 200 languages, and with the constant need of revision in one language or another, the task would never be completed; but, he added, "we may give thanks to God that He has given us this enormous task to do". He pointed out that some Bible Societies were little more than commercial publishing houses, and he urged such to take up some of the work that needed to be done in missionary areas, for, he said, "we do not know how much we can do until we have tried".

Reports from countries like Belgium, Austria and to some extent eastern Germany showed the need for colportage, and also in many cases the need for "helps to Bible reading" for those to whom the Bible is unknown. The report from Lebanon showed the doors to be wide open to Bible Society work, and the Bible Society to be alive to the opportunities before it, particularly through the systematic training of colporteurs. In North Africa, on the other hand, the situation was reported to be extremely difficult and Mr. Jossi, the B.F.B.S. agent from Algeria, asked that all those engaged in Bible Society work in that area should be upheld in thought and prayer.

As regards the relations between Bible Societies and churches, the Norwegian Bible Society reported a particularly active and encouraging movement in Norway by which the Bible Society and churches were working together in forming groups for the support of Bible Society work and for Bible study.

Accounts of new developments in Bible Society work in Russia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Rumania were received with great appreciation. These included the fact that considerable quantities of Scriptures printed in Hungary had recently been sent from that country to Czechoslovakia and Rumania, and that editions of the Scriptures were in preparation in Russia.

During the period of the conference an exhibition of visual-aid materials, arranged in two youth houses which form part of the Boldern community, were set up by Mr. Visser, of the Netherlands Bible Society, and Mrs. Pluckrose, of the B.F.B.S. This included a widely representative collection of illustrated Bibles, which were the subject of one session of the programme. The conference had the opportunity of seeing two films which made use of different techniques—the B.F.B.S. film "Version 699", in which cartoon drawings were extensively used, and a shortened version of the A.B.S. full-length film, "Our Bible—how it came to us". The latter was shown on the occasion of a public meeting in Männedorf.

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At the meeting of the Standing Committee which took place immediately after the regional conference in Boldern, the following regular members were present : Bishop Berggrav, the Rev. Dr. W. J. Platt (in the chair), Prelate Th. Schlatter and Baron F. L. S. F. van Tuyll van Serooskerken, with the Rev. Paul A. Collyer as alternate for Dr. North. Monsieur O. Beguin and the Rev. E. H. Robertson were present ex-officio.

One of the main items considered was the application from the Hungarian Bible Council for membership in the U.B.S. After full discussion with the General Secretary of the Hungarian Bible Council, Professor Dr. I. Kadar, the Standing Committee agreed unanimously to recommend to the U.B.S. Council that the Hungarian Bible Council be accepted into membership.

Plans were agreed upon for the first period of work of the recently appointed U.B.S. Study Secretary, the Rev. E. H. Robertson, who will take up his duties on May 1st, 1956, and will work in conjunction with the W.C.C.-I.M.C. Division of Studies. The emphasis during his first year of work is to be on the study of the relevance of the Bible in western scientific secularism. This is to be followed during his second year by extensive travel in Asia and Latin America in connection with the study in relation to non-Christian religions.

A proposal forwarded from the regional conference that a U.B.S. commission be set up to investigate the subject of Bible illustrations, was adopted and the General Secretary was asked to convene a group formed of representatives of the Bible Societies in Germany, Holland, Great Britain and the U.S.A., with power to co-opt.

The Committee decided to hold its next meeting in Indonesia in September 1956, and to accept the invitation of the Brazil Bible Society for the next Council meeting to take place in Brazil in 1957.

NEWS FROM ALL THE WORLD

Angola

The Rev. A. W. Marthinson, the recently appointed B.F.B.S. agent for the Congo Basin, paid his first visit to Angola last July. The following are extracts from a report of his visit :

It was with keenest interest and greatest expectation that I took off for my first visit to Angola, the large Portuguese colony just south of the Belgian Congo. The Annual Conference of the Angola Evangelical Alliance met in Luanda from July 12-17, and I was invited to attend these meetings.

There are at present more than four million people in Angola, most of them Bantus. The European population numbers over 80,000 and is almost entirely Portuguese. Luanda, the capital, is a modern city with some 180,000 inhabitants. When arriving by air one notices the up-to-date aerodrome, perhaps one of the most modern in this part of Africa.

Portuguese is spoken everywhere. I was amazed to hear how easily the Africans spoke this language. This is due, of course, to the educational system ; no account is taken of the vernaculars in the schools. All literature, even Bible translations, must appear in the diglot versions and this increases enormously the cost of all publications.

As soon as I arrived in Luanda, I was told by Dr. John Tucker, the former secretary of the Alliance and the grand old man of evangelical missions in Angola, that they are in real need of Scriptures. They asked not only for a few thousand but for some 30-40,000 New Testaments in one language alone.

The Umbundu tribe numbers some 1,300,000 people at present and consists of Bantus who came from the Belgian Congo some 300 years ago. This tribe was in the past known as a tribe of slave traders and ivory merchants. They have, it is said, been more ready to adopt western civilization than many of their neighbours. The Umbundu language is, therefore, becoming more and more a "lingua franca". Great and keen interest is shown amongst these people for Christianity. According to some figures, there are to-day about 230,000 Umbundu Protestant Christians. This is really remarkable because the total Protestant population in Angola is about half a million.

The Bible has always been and will always continue to be the greatest textbook in African religious education. We find in the beloved

Book so much which applies very well to the life of these people and which is easy for them to understand. One can everywhere sense a deep longing to learn and learning is immensely popular. We cannot escape our great responsibility to supply these people with Scriptures in newer and better editions. The Africans of to-day are not the same as those of fifty years ago. Several of the books we have been printing for years will have to be re-set to attract readers.

The translation work on the Old Testament must be speeded up. In the meantime, we will have to supply large quantities of New Testaments and Psalms. There are outstretched hands everywhere.

The Kimbundu people constitute another large tribe, numbering over a million. According to statistics, some 86,000 Christians are to be found in that tribe. It will take considerable time to complete the manuscripts for the Old Testament, but a committee of ten members is working on it.

It is remarkable that even the bushmen are coming out and asking for the Gospel. Amongst another great tribe, the Chokwe people, we find a real revival movement. Great changes have taken place. This is also true amongst the 65,000 Kuanyama people in the south. Gospel portions are needed now for these people. They have the New Testament but some diglot Gospel portions are now asked for.

Luchazi is another large tribe of some 370,000 people. They have had the New Testament since 1935 and the Old Testament has been translated by members of the South African General Mission. The manuscripts are now complete and they need their Bibles.

Up to the present, Angola, has had the complete Bible only in San Salvador Kikongo, used also in the Belgian Congo. However, not less than three new Bibles will be published for Angola within the next two or three years. The cost of producing these books is enormous as they must all be diglot versions; many technical difficulties arise with printing such Bibles and there is uncertainty about the final format. However, the Bible Society feels that these people must have the Scriptures regardless of difficulties. Much prayer is needed for this great field.

Belgium

About thirty colporteurs working in Belgium and France met together at Amougies, Belgium, from September 17—25, at a retreat arranged by the French Bible Committee in collaboration with the Société évangélique de Genève, the Belgian Bible Society and the Société centrale d'évangélisation of Paris.

Bible studies, lectures, discussions and exchange of experience formed a programme aimed at providing for those taking part an opportunity both for spiritual renewal and for increasing their knowledge of techniques for the work. Two outstanding addresses were given by the rector of the European College at Brugges, Professor H. Brugmans, who described the main political trends of present-day Europe and the importance of the Bible in the development of European civilisation and the European outlook. Other lecturers spoke on the one hand of the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other of the main sects at work to-day in France and Belgium, whose activities often create problems or obstacles for the work of Bible colportage. Other subjects to which special attention were given were the personal problems of the colporteur, psychological factors which are useful for him to be aware of in carrying out his work, his attitude to questions with which the world and the man of to-day confront him.

One of the decisions made was to place more emphasis on the necessity for a closer relationship between the work of the colporteurs and the life and work of the churches and parishes. The importance of this relationship was stressed on various occasions during the course of the retreat, thus picking up a similar concern expressed on other occasions by colporteurs of other countries. Frequent reference was also made to the problem of the use made of the Scriptures sold by the colporteurs, and here also there was striking evidence of the need for close co-operation between colporteurs and pastors, Bible Societies, societies for Bible reading and churches.

Brazil

On February 7th last, the *Bible Society of Brazil* circulated its ten millionth copy of the Scriptures since the Society's inception six years ago. During that period 774,068 Bibles, 562,321 Testaments and 8,651,601 Portions have been circulated. So far the supply of complete Bibles has not been sufficient to meet all the demands. The revision of the Old Testament, which is almost completed, will help to increase the demand.

The Bible Society of Brazil and its supporting Societies, the A.B.S. and B.F.B.S., are hard at work trying to meet the situation more adequately. Import difficulties which for many years prevented an adequate supply from being sent to Rio de Janeiro were overcome last year, and the effect of this improvement is already being felt. Local production of Bibles by the Bible Society of Brazil, which also started last year in Sao Paulo, is also beginning to ease the situation.

A further factor in meeting the need has been the beginning of Scripture production by the Baptist Publishing House in Rio de Janeiro. Up to last November that organisation had issued over 450,000 Bibles and 125,000 Testaments.

Congo

Congolese Christians this year celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first Bible published in one of the languages of the country, Kikongo-Fioti, which is spoken in the lower part of the Congo valley. (The first complete Bible published in Africa, the Malagasy Bible, appeared only twenty years earlier.)

"The translation of the Kikongo-Fioti Bible", writes Mr. Marthinson, "marked a new era for the great land of Congo. The appearance of the first complete Bible was a sure mark that the new Church had struck roots in the lower Congo. When the time came for revision, one noticed that the Church was growing and maturing. To-day, more than 20 years after the revision was undertaken, we find a large, fine community of Protestant Christians in this area".

Egypt

A heavy programme of Scripture printing was under way in Cairo at the beginning of the summer : 50,000 pocket Arabic Bibles in one press, 8,000 standard size Arabic Bibles in another, a permanent run of Scripture Portions which amounts to scores of thousands each year. An order has already been placed for a new edition of 30,000 Arabic Bibles and 15,000 New Testaments.

From all Arabic-speaking countries comes a slowly but steadily increasing demand for Scriptures, indicating that the work is progressing and the message of the Gospel reaching more and more of the people.

England

One of the high-lights of the *British and Foreign Bible Society's* headquarters' life in the early summer was the reception at the Bible House, London, of a delegation of Russian churchmen who visited Britain during the first part of July. The delegation, formed of representatives of the Orthodox and Baptist evangelical Russian churches, and of

the Lutheran Latvian and Estonian churches, were entertained to dinner in the committee room. Lord Luke, U.B.S. Treasurer and a member of the B.F.B.S. General Committee, presided and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Fisher were among the guests.

The evening included a visit to the library and several speeches and addresses. The Rev. Dr. W. J. Platt, as General Secretary of the B.F.B.S. and Chairman of the U.B.S. Council, spoke about the long history of the relations of the B.F.B.S. with Russia (over 23 million volumes of the Scriptures, of which 18 millions were in Russian and the rest in 40 other languages, were circulated during the one hundred years of co-operation by the B.F.B.S. and the Russian Bible Society), and expressed the hope that Russia might soon be represented in the world fellowship of the U.B.S. which expresses in a concrete way the world unity of the work of Bible translation, production and circulation. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox and of the Baptist churches described the plans they had (in the case of the Orthodox) or work in hand (in the case of the Baptists) in the field of Scripture production. An edition of 10,000 copies was in production for the Baptist Church in Riga ; the Orthodox were preparing for a large edition of the Bible (with Apocrypha) in the hope that the printing would be completed by the end of the year. In both cases, paper was supplied by the government and the printing done by offset, using as the basis the A.B.S. edition of the B.F.B.S. Russian Bible in the new orthography.

More recently, arrangements have been made with the Russian authorities for the despatch to Russia of a set of moulds for the production of Russian Bibles there.

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Another notable occasion was the visit of a delegation of members of the Jubilee Congress of the Baptist World Alliance, with representatives of twelve nations, including seven Russian Baptists. Since the time of William Carey the Baptist missions have always shown great concern for the translation of the Scriptures and for many decades the Baptist Missionary Society has had its own Bible translation and production department.

The Rev. W. J. Bradnock had addressed the World Congress on behalf of the U.B.S.

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The Bible House Stamp Corner which, through the sorting and sale of stamps, collects enough money to support the work of four colporteurs in various parts of the world, last July received what is probably the largest single gift ever brought there : 400,000 stamps collected by the girls of a high school in one of the London suburbs.

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The following information is quoted from the last annual report (for 1954) of the Scripture Gift Mission :

During the year 14,935 Bibles, 57,805 New Testaments, 781,722 Gospels or other complete books, 3,702,963 leaflets and text cards, a total of 8,263,714 publications in 222 languages were granted free of charge to chaplains serving with H.M. Forces, missionaries at home and abroad and national workers in 171 countries and islands. In addition, 1,869,538 copies were sold by our business department, making a total of 10,133,252 copies of God's Word, in part or in whole.

France

The *French Bible Committee* has produced the Gospel of John, in illustrated magazine form, under the title "From darkness to light", using the A.B.S. pictures. This autumn the Gospel of Luke will be published in illustrated magazine form, with

original pictures. Making use of the new A.B.S. coloured, illustrated covers for small Gospels, the French Committee has issued a new series of colportage Gospels, more modern in their type and presentation, following a method which has proved most successful. The four Gospels will also be sold as a set along with the Book of Acts in illustrated box cartons.

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A joint committee has been formed consisting of ten members of the committee of the Bible Society of France (S.B.F.) and ten from the Bible Society of Paris. This joint committee will work within the framework of the French Bible Committee, and its main task will be to make final decisions regarding texts and to make known the Scripture needs of the churches. The B.F.B.S. agency in France would be responsible, within the framework of the French Bible Committee, for all matters of production and distribution.

Germany

The *Bergische Bible Society* (Wuppertal) reports having taken responsibility, in co-operation with the Netherlands Bible Society, for the production of 11,000 copies of each of the four Gospels and Acts in Mentavei, a language spoken in Sumatra. The edition will be ready by the end of the year. This action of the Bergische Bible Society represents a further step in the renewal of interest among the German Bible Societies for the production of Scriptures for the mission field.

The *Stuttgart Bible Society* reports that after four years of intensive preparation, the manuscript of the 'Stuttgarter Hebraïsche Wortkonkordanz zum Altentestament' (following the masoretic text as worked out by Dr. Paul Kahle in the Kittel Bible) is now ready for the press. The concordance will appear in twelve instalments, the first to come out next November, the last two years later.

The price has been calculated in such a way as to make the work easily available to students, a decision which, of course, involved heavy financial sacrifice for the Stuttgart Bible Society. This publication is, of course, meant not only for German scholars but for teachers and students in all parts of the world. A special publicity leaflet has been prepared by the Stuttgart Society and can be ordered from them (Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, Hauptstätterstrasse 51-B, Stuttgart-S, Germany).

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On 11th June a Bible exhibition, sponsored by the Gutenberg Museum, was opened in Mainz to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in that city. In addition to the Gutenberg Bible itself, on which the main attention was focussed, the organisers had brought together an extraordinarily rich collection of historical Bibles. Most of the almost 300 volumes displayed were originals and in exceptionally good condition.

In connection with the exhibition, the *Union of Evangelical Bible Societies in Germany* organised a special Bible Day on Sunday, 12th June, when special services were held in the churches of Mainz and neighbourhood. A public meeting, held in the afternoon, was addressed by Herr Uhl, of the Austrian Bible Committee, by the General Secretary of the U.B.S. and by Professor Rapp, of Mainz University and reviser of the Twi Bible.

On the following day, still under the auspices of the Bible Societies, the pastors of the area were invited to attend meetings at which problems connected with the revision of the Luther translation and with Bible illustrations were raised and discussed.

At the annual meeting of the Union of Evangelical Bible Societies which took place on the following day, the chairman, the Rev. R.

Steiner, presented a searching report on the present situation of Bible Society work in Germany, recognising that the Societies had to go a long way before they could be satisfied that adequate attention was paid to their missionary responsibility at home and abroad. The speaker deprecated the use of Bible Society collections for a general reduction in the selling price of Scriptures at home, and, in a plea for appropriate promotional service, stressed the importance of making German churches and Christians aware of the need to become servants of the Bible Societies' ideals and aims, rather than making the Bible Societies their own servant. Calling for greater activity and drive on the part of the Bible Societies themselves and appealing for more real and effective collaboration, the Rev. R. Steiner suggested the following points :

We ought to have committees which are prepared to work. We suffer very much in our church from people being on too many committees. The result is that the committees themselves do not achieve any real work. The Bible Societies must therefore have committee members who are not already burdened with other offices.

The rules of a Society should not restrict the work, but should serve to promote it. If we can dare to revise the Luther text of the Bible, surely a revision of the rules of a Bible Society should be much more possible !

We should confer together about what we can and ought to do. In this way we would come to a common basis and united action. We have to ask ourselves : how could such co-operation come about ?

We have already had a committee for the revision of the Luther translation and will have need of it in the future. Why not other committees, as they exist in the Bible Societies of other countries ?

We ought, for example, to have a distribution committee, for the missionary distribution of the Bible by the diaconate, which would work in co-operation with the committee for Bible Mission. For the distribution of the Bible on the mission field and in the 'Junge Kirche', a missionary committee would be necessary, whose task would be to promote the translation, printing and despatching of Bibles and Portions in the mission field, in collaboration with the evangelical missionary council.

A Promotion Committee would be needed for promotion and the spreading of information concerning the work of the Bible Societies, and whose duty it would also be to cultivate relations with the press.

Hongkong

The Hongkong A.B.S., B.F.B.S. and N.B.S.S. joint agency has now opened a retail shop in one of the main streets of Hongkong. Hitherto Scriptures in Hongkong had been sold through the agency of the Bible Book and Tract Depot.

The Hongkong agency is also being provided with a mobile book van, which should greatly facilitate and improve Scripture distribution in the New Territories (part of Hongkong area on the mainland), particularly among the thousands of refugees and temporary settlers who are scattered there. As the Rev. L. E. Holmgren, who was there last Spring, indicates in a report, the opportunity in Hongkong is unusual, for there are thousands of refugees going back to China and for whom their passage in the Colony is the only occasion perhaps of getting to know the Word of God.

India

From a letter sent by Mr. R. H. P. Dart, the business manager of the *Bible Society of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, we quote the following excerpts :

Now a word as to some of our hopes. In addition to the new

languages on which we are concentrating, there is also an urgent need for revision of the Bible in some of the major languages. This is necessary in order to bring the Bible to the people in the language of to-day, in modern speech which they will easily recognise to be accurate and up-to-date. Revision work has already been started in four or five of these major languages. This means an increase of staff involving the use of at least two expert scholars in the Indian languages, but as we sense the urgency, if not the tenseness of the situation at times, we feel sure we are being led by God in this right new direction. Another of our hopes is connected with the proposed production of illustrated magazine Gospels. It is proposed that we translate into the main Indian languages all four Gospels with many suitable illustrations, such as has been done both in England and America. The pictures will be the same as those used in the American illustrated Gospels, as they are more suitable out here, and we hope this literature will attract the attention of the well read and better educated people of India. Another factor which also should be mentioned under this title of hopes, is the production of literacy Gospels, in view of the fact that there are many millions of new literates each year here, for whom we should cater. For these people we are hoping to print in 15 languages a simplified version of the Gospel. As the majority of these new literates come from the poorest classes of people who cannot afford to pay much for these Gospels, this work will naturally have to be heavily subsidized.

It has been said that there are nearly 350,000 literate Christians in India, Pakistan and Ceylon who do not possess their own Bible. At the present moment we are taking a survey through our field secretaries and pastors trying to check these figures, and to discover whether the reason for this is poverty or indifference. Whilst it will not be easy for us to reduce our present selling price, which only covers about half the actual cost of production, we would still like to try and meet this particular situation.

Mexico

The national synod of the National Presbyterian Church meeting in July in Mexico, decided to appoint a special synodal committee "for the cause of the Bible". Its task will be to stimulate the clergy, congregations and churches of that denomination to promote interest in the reading, study, meditation and distribution of the Holy Scriptures, and support in any way possible the cause of the Bible.

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The last issue of the magazine published by the A.B.S. Mexico agency, 'La Biblia en Mexico', contains a remarkable story of a church born out of Bible reading. It all started in August, 1923, in Ostuacan, a village of the Chiapas Province, when two friends, Felix Mendoza and Ernesto Rojas, having over celebrated the fiesta of St. Domingo de Guzman, were chanting the glory of God and that of the saint. But another friend, Guillen, countered them : the glory of God, good ; but not Domingo. He is an idol and not a saint. And he read to them Exodus 20 : 1-17.

It was the first time that Felix Mendoza and Ernesto Rojas had heard a passage of the Scriptures read to them. Guillen himself had got his copy of the Bible in a small town, Pichucalco, he could not say from whom, and he had read into it occasionally. Felix Mendoza, interested by what he had heard, procured a Bible himself a few months later from a man who had bought one in another town from a Christian lady.

These two Bibles were the first known to come to that province.

Mendoza, Rojas and Guillén began to study their Bibles, to start with between two glasses of eau de vie. But the word of God was slowly opening its way into these peoples' hearts and transformed them. Other people joined in, during the course of years, forming by and by a very sizeable group.

In 1932, the leaders of the group, Mendoza among them, went to the Roman priest to witness to him, and in spite of his efforts, he could not bring them back to his flock.

For several years the Bible readers continued to meet, without adopting any definite form of organisation; but they went on most determinedly in their reading and study of the Bible. The number of believers went on increasing, until in 1941 Juan A. Manueles established himself in the area. With his help two Christian communities were organised in two different sections of the town, which were eventually received in 1948 into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which had been active for many years in the Chiapas province. In September, 1950, the more important of the two communities was accepted into the category of the churches; it already counted over one hundred communicant members.

To-day this same church has given birth to seven other communities, and works in several preaching and missionary centres in the town. Felix Mendoza who, thirty-two years ago, celebrated so gaily the virtues of alcohol and of St. Domingo, is now one of the most revered leaders of the church in Ostuacan!

Switzerland

The 'Maison de la Bible'—also called now the 'Société biblique de Genève' and related to the 'Action Biblique', a revival and missionary movement started after the first world war by the Rev. A. Alexander—reports a circulation of 55,796 Bibles, 37,129 New Testaments and 202,668 Gospels in 1954. These Scriptures were circulated mainly in Switzerland, France, North Africa, Italy and Brazil, through the various 'Maisons de la Bible' established in those areas.

Tibet

The 'Moravian Missions' published in its July issue the following information about the revision of the Tibetan New Testament, now in progress:

There has been considerable criticism of the Tibetan Bible from missionaries working on other parts of the Tibetan border. Last year, Br. Vittoz writes, we received a request from Br. Driver and the British and Foreign Bible Society to make some corrections for the reprint of the Tibetan New Testament. Knowing how many years had been spent on it already, Br. Tsetan Puntsok—who had been approached—was not keen on tackling such a big task again. However, Br. Vittoz urged him to do so and started on the work with him. Soon the task gripped Br. Tsetan Puntsok and he took a real interest in it. Starting with the Gospel of St. Matthew, they made a list of corrections that would be needed in the text, but once they started looking at it with a critical eye there were so many improvements to be made that the list grew out of proportion. Having made a score or so pages of corrections, they sent them to Br. Driver, then closed their books for four to five months, thought about it thoroughly, listened to comments on the Tibetan Bible by Ladaki Christians and other missionaries who made use of it. The first Tibetan Bible was produced by Jaeshke about 1865, the second by Heyde and Macdonald at Darjeeling about 1900 and the third by Yoseb Gergan about 1940.

They found that even the third and best rendering of the New Testament was clumsy and unpleasant in the Gospels, but quite incomprehensible in large portions of the

Epistles. In fact, Br. Tsetan Puntsok, probably the best qualified man to understand Tibetan Christian literature, always used to read the Epistles in the English text, although he has only a working knowledge of English. Most people in Leh simply never read the Epistles and reading from them in church had to be given up.

Ultimately, Br. Vittoz and Br. Tsetan Puntsok concluded that, whatever the cost, whatever time was spent on it, they must try to improve the Tibetan New Testament. Br. Tsetan's qualifications for the work are obvious. Br. Vittoz has a good knowledge of Greek, so together they stated on the Gospel of St. Matthew, making a completely new translation. They soon found out that, provided they spent a generous amount of time pondering over the text and some leading commentaries, it was possible to improve the text in several directions: simplicity for partly educated readers, absence of dialectical expressions for readers from all districts, elegance of style and, of course, accuracy in translation. It was often discovered that some problems arising in the translation from English or Urdu (which were necessarily the basis of Gergan's work), did not exist when translating from the original, New Testament Greek being naturally nearer to the oriental mentality and ways of expression than English can be. In some chapters, like the Sermon on the Mount, and the Parables, Br. Vittoz writes that they have managed to reach a translation of which they are proud . . . .

The present plan is to circulate the new translation among readers of Tibetan so as to collect information, criticisms and amendments before a Bible Society is requested to print the whole or parts of it.

United States of America

The University of Chicago is considering using an electronic tabulating machine, in order to be able to compare Bible texts more easily. The text variations would be entered on cards, with exact details of the source, chapter, language, etc., and then automatically registered, tabulated and compared by the electronic machine. As we know, no other literary work of antiquity has such a wealth and complexity of renderings with an enormous number of text variations, as the New Testament. The University of Chicago is particularly interested in such a comparison of texts, because it has at its disposal around 700 early series of readings of the New Testament. The library of the Berlin theologian, Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, who died in 1869, provided the beginning of this collection.

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In a report presented to the *American Bible Society's* District and Division Secretaries' Conference (a triennial meeting of all secretaries at work for the home organisation), Dr. Nida summed up in the following way the present aims of the A.B.S. translations department:

On-the-spot help: If we are to meet the needs which exist, we cannot wait in New York until some unsuspecting missionary sends or brings us a manuscript to check. In such instances we can do very little more than accept or reject, or at best suggest a few minor improvements. If we are to assist translators significantly, we must provide the helps which they need, and when and where they need them. Working out a satisfactory alphabet for some of the Nilotic languages must be done in the Sudan, not in New York. Giving proper guidance and technical assistance in problems involving several indigenous tongues in the Bulu area of the French Cameroons can only be accomplished on the spot. Resolving differences between committee members working in the Chol language of Mexico must be

accomplished by sitting down with them and their Chol helpers while they meet in Mitla, Oaxaca. Setting up committees for major revisions in the principal languages of the Philippines can never succeed by sending out letters and intermittent instructions from the home office. On-the-spot help is indispensable and will continue to be increased now that we are enlarging our staff of linguistic consultants.

Published helps : But, try as we might, we could never accomplish our task if we relied wholly or even primarily upon field consultation. We could neither find nor support enough consultants to go around. Accordingly, we must undertake a programme of published helps by which we can provide for translators, both missionaries and nationals, comments, suggestions and advice, gathered from the experience of translators everywhere. We have now set up a fifteen-year publication programme to include a series of Translators' Notes (first on the New Testament and then on the Old), a book of Word Studies, a volume on the Science of Translating, a somewhat technical but at the same time practical study of Language and Culture. While all of these major projects are being undertaken, we hope to produce a series of articles and pamphlets treating more limited and popular aspects of the translator's task.

Translations for New Literates : The new literate has often been badly neglected. He is pushed through a primer but then finds that most of what is published in his language is entirely too hard for him to read. This may be especially true of the translation of the Scriptures in his own language. To remedy this problem we have begun a programme for the translation of the New Testament into Simple Spanish, especially designed for the thousands of Indians in Latin America who are rapidly emerging into the Spanish-speaking world but for whom the traditional translations are entirely too complicated in vocabulary and grammatical forms. The language of this Spanish New Testament will be perfectly "correct" Spanish, but it will be simple. A similar project is also being undertaken for Haiti, where there is a crying need for the New Testament and Psalms in Simple French, grammatically correct but more intelligible to the Haitian peasant than the high-flown language of the traditional texts.

Helps for the reader : The newly-literate person is not the only one who has difficulty with the Scriptures or who requires some assistance if the text is to be as fully meaningful as it should be. We must have more satisfactory maps (which are in process of preparation), a series of historically accurate black-and-white illustrations to interest the reader and help him understand more of the background of the Scriptures, section headings to assist the reader in finding and identifying the contents of the Bible, a revised reference system which will make more "sense" than some based on scholarly allusions, tables of weights and measures and practical concordances which will meet the needs of a growing church.

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The A.B.S. has now published the following illustrated magazine Gospels : Matthew in Japanese and Spanish, Luke in Portuguese, John in Japanese, Korean and Spanish, Acts in Korean and Portuguese (the latter printed in Brazil).

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On May 7, 1955, in Bloomfield, New Jersey, a thousand Gospels in the Songo language were dedicated before being sent on their way to readers in Portuguese Angola, in Africa. The dedication of the Songo Gospel of John was part of an interesting project undertaken by the young people of the Westminster Fellowship in the Presbyterian Synod

of New Jersey. It was their idea to try to raise funds to pay for the publication of a Portion of the Scriptures to be sent to the mission field. The Songo Gospel of John was nearing completion and it became their special concern. To date, just over a thousand dollars have been turned in by the young New Jersey Presbyterians to meet the cost of composition, proof reading and plates, which amounted to $1,300.

Miscellaneous

Reference was made in BULLETIN 22 (pp. 33-34) to the Singapore Conference which brought together Bible Society secretaries and agents at work in South East Asia. At that time no detailed information was available about the decisions reached at the Conference. In the following notes, Dr. Ralph Mortensen, A.B.S.-B.F.B.S. Travelling Secretary for South-East Asia, sums up the main recommendations of the Conference to the home Societies. They were :

(1) The appointment of highly-qualified Chinese as associate secretaries in Singapore-Malaya, Hong-kong-Taiwan, Indo-China, in order to assure closer co-operation of the Chinese churches with the Bible Society and more effective distribution of Scriptures among Chinese.

(2) The purchase of more efficient and modern equipment to promote wider circulation of Scriptures among overseas Chinese :

(*a*) motor vans with audio-visual aids ;
(*b*) motor tricycles ;
(*c*) motor launches with audio-visual aids.

Appointment of personnel to handle this equipment, driver-mechanics and salesmen capable of operating audio-visual machines.

(3) Stock-piling of Chinese Scriptures sufficient to meet any emergency that might arise in the Far East.

(4) Closer contact with Chinese Christian churches and missions working among Chinese through advisory committees, with Chinese and western personnel, assisting the regional secretaries.

(5) Inauguration of uniform prices for missionary editions of Chinese Scriptures throughout South-East Asia.

(6) Concerted effort of all regional secretaries to increase voluntary colportage among all groups of Chinese through the Chinese Christian churches.

(7) The publication of a quarterly Bible Society bulletin in Chinese (or, possibly, in a bilingual form—Chinese and English), to foster a greater understanding of the programme of the Bible Societies and their methods and techniques.

(8) The production of a new sound film depicting life in the newly-established Chinese villages in Malaya and how the Bible Society pioneered among them.

(9) The establishment of a research department to which the following and related questions can be referred:

(*a*) The recruitment and training of a corps of a new type of highly trained colporteurs for work among the Chinese of South-East Asia.

(*b*) The revision, publication or discontinuation of publication of the various editions and versions of the Scriptures used by Chinese (e.g. Cantonese, Hakka, Amoy, Swatow, etc.).

Reports indicate that most of the above recommendations have met with the approval of the home Societies and the regional secretaries are already busy implementing their respective projects.

PERSONALIA

Kurt Zabel

The Federation of the Bible Societies in Eastern Germany last Spring appointed Dr. Kurt Zabel as Secretary. The new Secretary, after four years spent in Russia as a prisoner of war, served as minister in one of the churches of Rostock, his home city. For many years Dr. Zabel has been concerned with the problem of helping church people to find their way anew into the Bible. One side of his new ministry will be to help pastors and church leaders in this particular aspect of it.

Ming C. Chao

On July 7 last the Board of Managers of the A.B.S. appointed the Rev. Ming C. Chao, at present a member of the staff of the A.B.S. Translations Department, as Secretary for Thailand. Mr. Chao was born in Shanghai of a noted Christian family. His father served on the China Bible House Board of Directors for many years. Mr. Chao holds a B.D. degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and a Th.M. in Ecumenics from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is married and has two children and he and his wife are naturalized American citizens. They will sail for Thailand shortly after the New Year. Mr. Chao will be taking the place of Mr. Voth, who will be returning to his former missionary work.

George Pimenoff

We regret to have to record the untimely death of Mr. George G. Pimenoff, whom many readers of the BULLETIN will have known or met at Bible Society conferences. For twenty years Mr. Pimenoff served as agent of the B.F.B.S. in Finland, until the agency was handed over to the Finnish Bible Society. Under the new management, Mr. Pimenoff continued to work at the Helsinki depot, particularly responsible for all production and the main part of the circulation of Scriptures of the Finnish Bible Society. Mr. Pimenoff's devotion and loyalty to the cause of the Bible Society were outstanding and under his enthusiastic leadership the work continued to prosper in Finland in spite of all the hardships and difficulties encountered during the war and in the immediate post-war period. Mr. Pimenoff, who was just 60 years old, leaves a widow and four children.

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Contributors to this Issue.

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THE REV. JAMES M. ROE is secretary of the joint Agency, of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society, for Bible Lands South.

THE REV. PAUL A. COLLYER is one of the secretaries of the American Bible Society, responsible for the work in Latin America and in Europe.

THE REV. T. MIYAKODA is General Secretary of the Japan Bible Society.

MR. FOUAD E. ACCAD is Secretary of the joint Sub-Agency (of the B.F.B.S. and A.B.S.) for Syria and Lebanon.